

COMRADE
GULLIVER

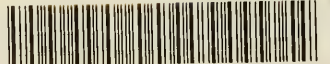
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COMRADE
GULLIVER



COMRADE GULLIVER

AN
ILLUSTRATED
ACCOUNT
OF
TRAVEL
INTO
THAT
STRANGE
COUNTRY
THE
UNITED
STATES
OF
AMERICA

**HUGO
GELLERT**

G·P·PUTNAM'S SONS : NEW YORK

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TO LIVIA
my comrade in a topsy-turvy world

FOREWORD

AN account of the strange and amusing adventures of my ancestor, Lemuel Gulliver, provoked considerable scepticism during his time. He published a book at the beginning of the second quarter of the eighteenth century and the authenticity of certain parts of his narrative was questioned. I have deep sympathy for my great-great-great-grandfather in whose day the dangers and discomforts of travel had made it difficult for him to prove the truth of his assertions.

My own adventures in the United States of America are even more fantastic than the experiences of my forefather. The extraordinary peculiarities of the country, the amazing behavior of the people and the antics of the government, are far more eccentric and unaccountable than anything Lemuel Gulliver recorded—despite his numerous voyages. Nevertheless in this age of the telephone, the radio and the printing press it can be easily ascertained, even by the most casually interested, that the contents of this work, the pictures and the words, unbelievable as they may seem, present the truth and nothing but the truth.

Comrade GULLIVER

Moscow, September 1935

P. S.—I wish to acknowledge great indebtedness and gratitude to Comrade Georges, an Hungarian exile in Moscow. He introduced me to the Comrade Artist and thereby contributed to the realization of this book.

COMRADE
GULLIVER

GREED IS A VIRTUE

MY good friend, Mr. Keen, with whom I had become acquainted during his visit to our Soviet Union, greeted me as I stepped off the boat. He escorted me to an automobile that seated only two. He slipped my knapsack into a square opening in the rear end of the car and off we drove.

At the entrance of a luxurious building, a man of great dignity received us. He was attired in a gorgeous uniform and looked like a Czarist general. Elevators glided up and down. We got off at the sixteenth floor, where Mr. Keen lived. It seemed to me that he had gathered treasures from the four corners of the earth. American Indian blankets, African masks, Maori carvings, Persian pottery and Chinese paintings were on display. He opened a door and said: "This is your room." A bath-robe, bathing suit and slippers were prepared for me. "Put them on," he said, "and we will jump down for a swim."

After a good swim in the colorfully tiled pool, which was located in the basement of the building, we returned to the apartment to dress. "Your attire is too outlandish for America," he said. "You must have a new outfit." He opened a door in his bedroom. A bright electric light automatically illuminated a huge closet bulging with clothing. "What is this?" I asked in surprise. "A clothing co-operative?"

"Yes, it is that for the present, since I want you to help yourself to some of my clothes."

"Does everyone in America own as many clothes as you do?" I asked.

"No—some own more—others go almost naked," answered Mr. Keen.

Then I said: "Please forgive me if I seem impertinent, but is greed permissible in America?"

Mr. Keen chuckled, "Permissible? Why, it's a mark of distinction. The more an individual possesses, the greater the honor and respect accorded him."



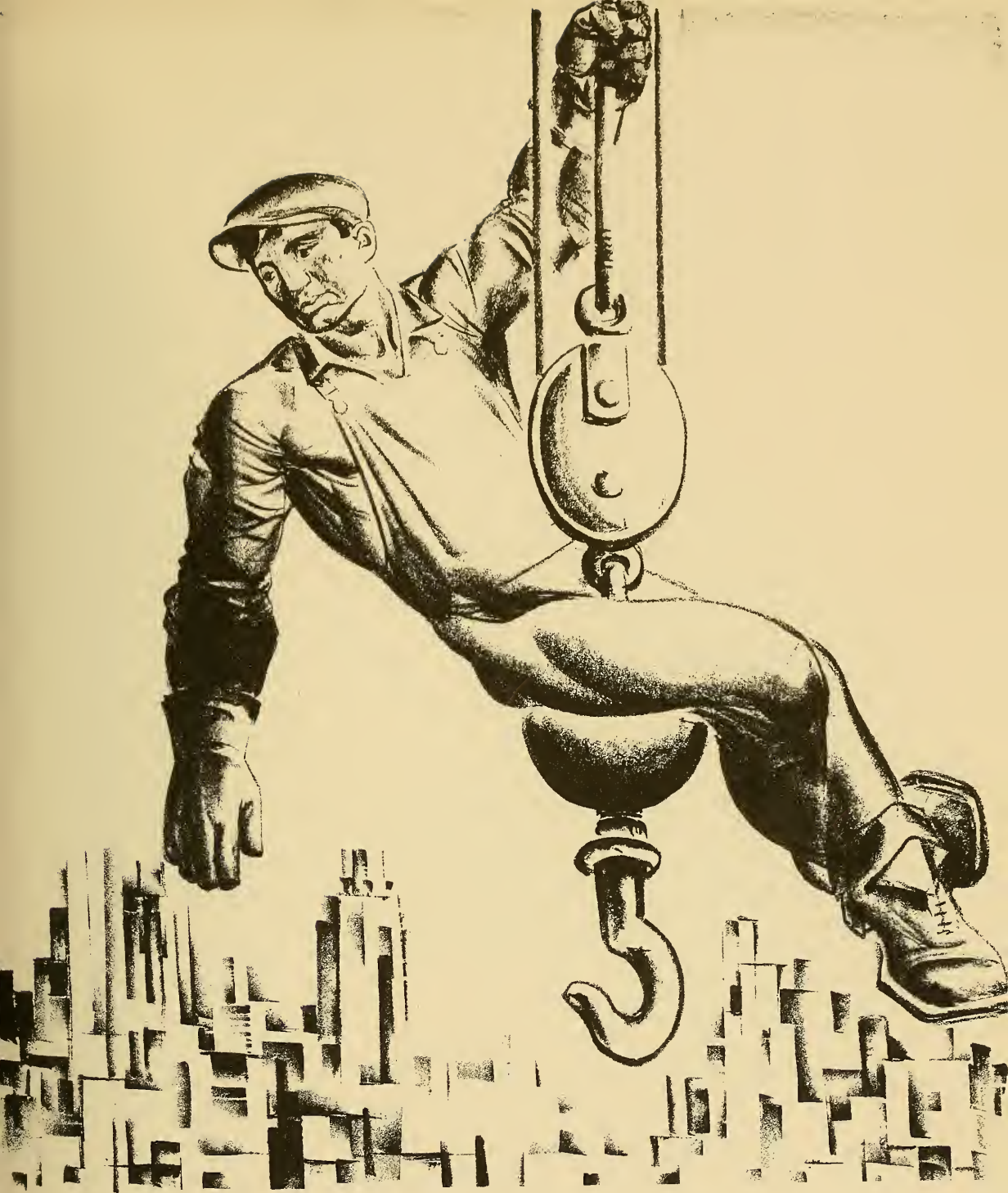
USELESS

AS the Americans would say it, "We took in the town". A tempo of lightning! Underground, overhead, on the surface of the streets—people were rushed to their destination. Motor cars, three and four abreast, were speeding in every direction. Blinding shop windows, luxuriously dressed women and elegantly attired men crowded the avenues. One was constantly aware that it is the richest city of the richest country in the world.

The skyscrapers! I strained my neck watching their vertical lines vanish into the sky. Empire State Building! Tallest of them all, its upright metal ribs glitter in the sunlight. Elevators swiftly sucked us up to the topmost floor. There an unforgettable panorama of the Wonder City spread before us. Streets intersected each other, like ruled lines on a ledger. Towers boldly demanded attention. At their feet the tops of lesser structures formed angular, geometrical patterns. Here and there open spaces—parks. Graceful bridges shot across the gleaming waters which encircled the city. We looked down from the dizzy heights.

Way down below, in the street, men were mere fleas. Those fleas built this tower! What audacity of the imagination to conceive this palace that reaches above the clouds! How daring to make it a steel and stone reality!

Mr. Keen pointed out that many floors of this building were empty. He also pointed to other skyscrapers—mostly unoccupied. Can it be that like our churches in Moscow, they have outlived their time? But if we had these buildings in Moscow! What apartments they would make! Airy, well lighted and comfortably heated. Thousands of families would make their homes in them. In America they remain vacant—wasted!



POOR FISH

IN an imposing marble hall of great dimensions, a milling mass of humans shouted and gesticulated wildly. At first I believed it was a riot, perhaps the beginning of the revolution in America. Later, it became evident that I was mistaken. But the purpose of this strange demonstration was a mystery to me.

I saw electrically illuminated numbers appear and disappear on signboards. Mr. Keen's explanation, that the men were engaged in buying and selling, puzzled me even more, since I could see no goods changing hands. As a matter of fact, there was nothing saleable in sight.

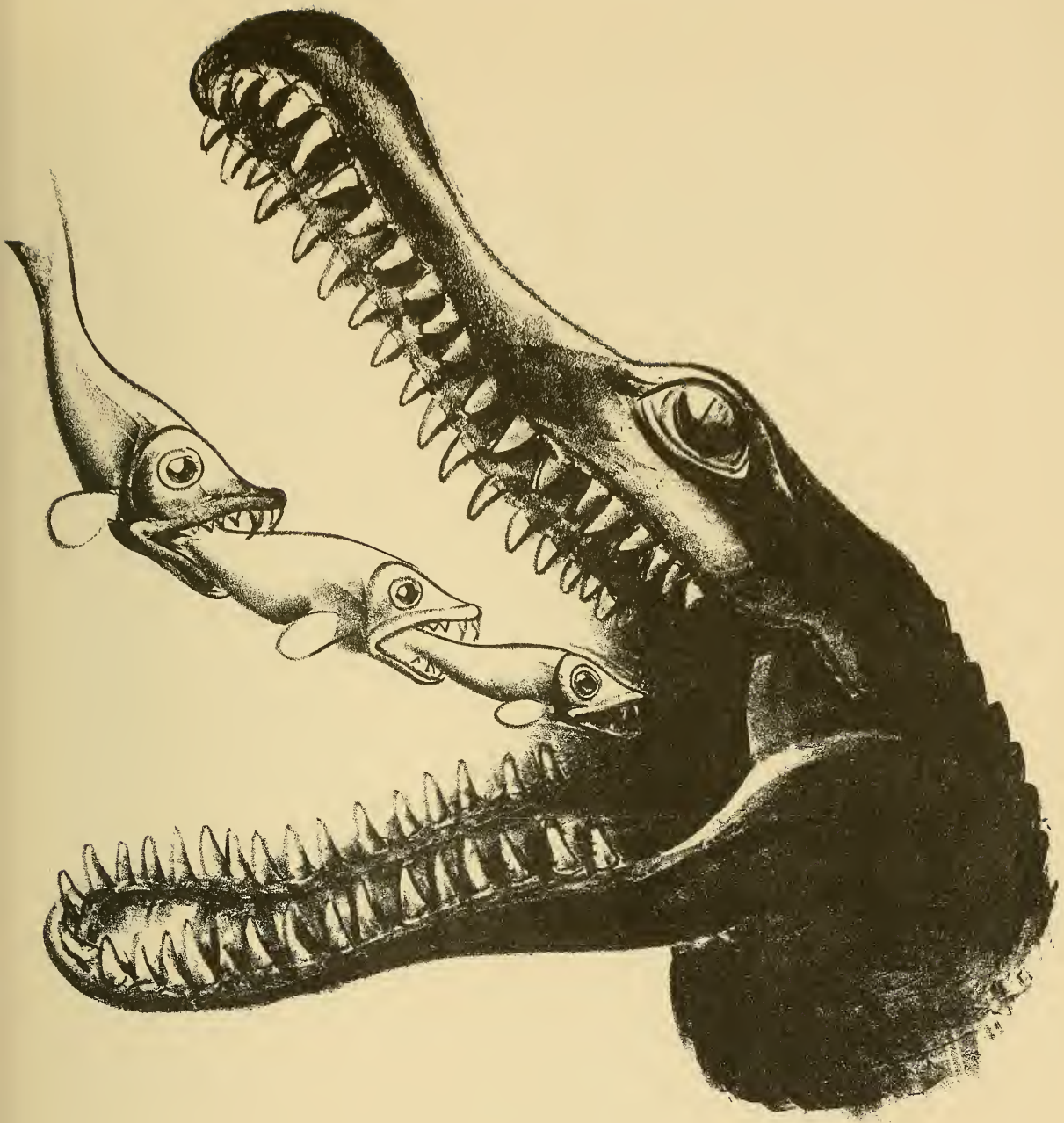
"Shares in all industrial enterprises, textiles, mines, electrical power, steel mills, although they may be located thousands of miles distant, are bought and sold here," Mr. Keen informed me.

"But those cannot be sold, they belong to everybody," I was about to say. But then I remembered where I was. "How honest these people must be!" I exclaimed to hide my confusion. "They trust each other. They buy what they cannot even see."

"They don't have to see anything because there is nothing to see," was Mr. Keen's reply. "All they buy is a beautifully printed paper which is bought only to be sold again. All these honest people are gamblers. They are out to take the shirt off each other's back. Everyone buys in the hope of making a profit at the expense of his neighbor. Just now the bottom fell out of the market. That is what the excitement is about. Many of them will be wiped out before the end of the day."

"Wiped out?" I asked.

"Yes," Mr. Keen answered, "they will be penniless."



BUSINESS IS BUSINESS

Mr. Keen showed me a letter from the Social Director of a New York Hospital: "We have had for a long time now people coming to us asking for food and stating that they have not eaten for several days and it can be seen by their appearance that they are telling the truth. This week we have had four children admitted with the diagnosis of 'starvation'. One, who was found eating out of the garbage can, has died since admission. Another infant of three months is about to die. The mother was feeding it sugar and water."

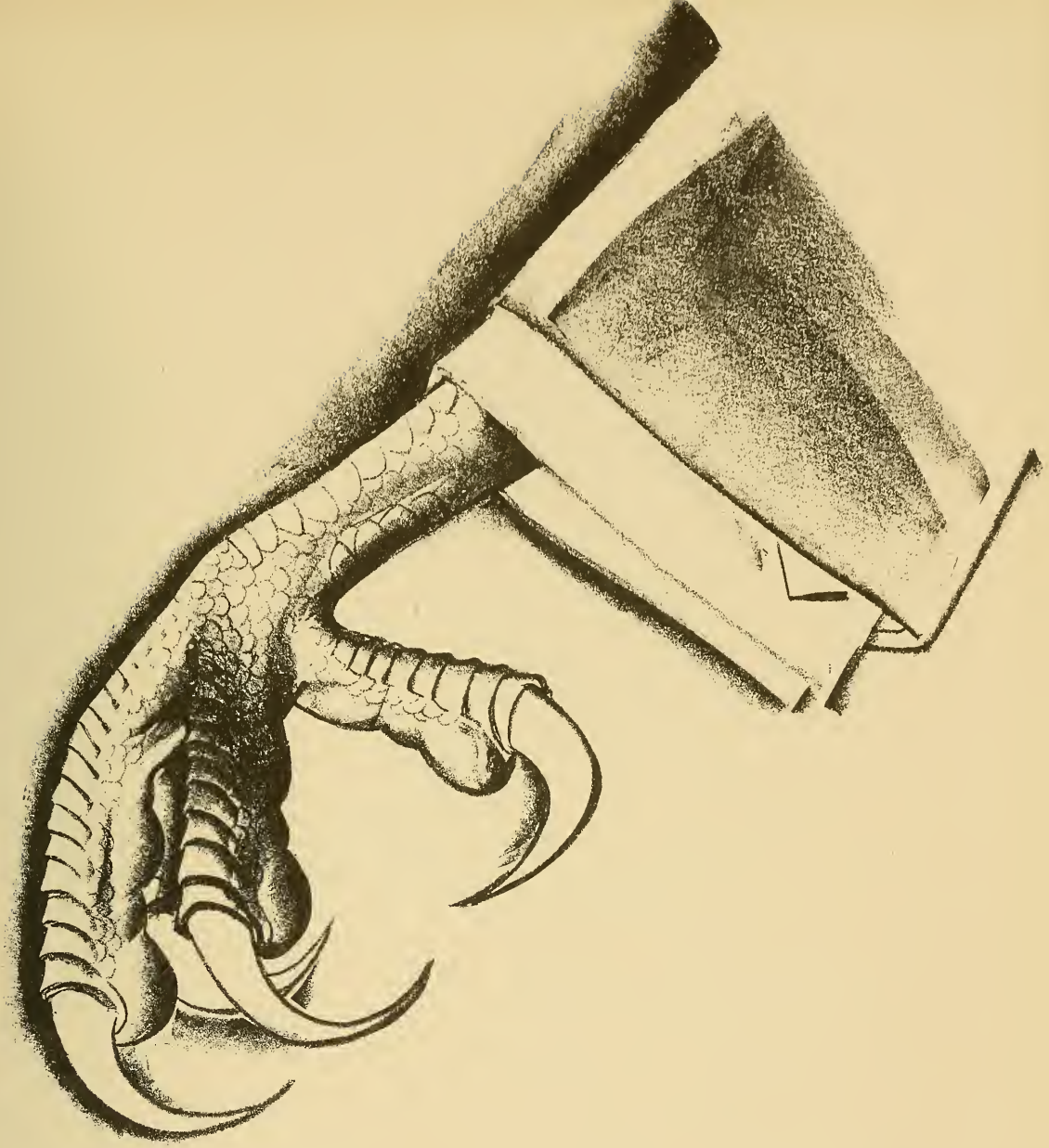
"How can this be?" I asked Mr. Keen. "Was it lack of rain that killed the crop? Was it frost that destroyed it? Did the locusts devour it?" "No," he answered. "Men, women and children starve. But not because of drought, nor frost, nor locust. We have so much wheat, so much corn, so much milk, fruit, beef and mutton in America, we don't know what to do with it all. Our warehouses are so stuffed they are ready to burst."

"And people are left to die of starvation?"

"These people are poor. They have no money. They cannot buy food."

"Then why don't they give it to them for nothing?"

"Oh, that wouldn't be profitable," he said, and laughed because of the perplexity visible in my face.

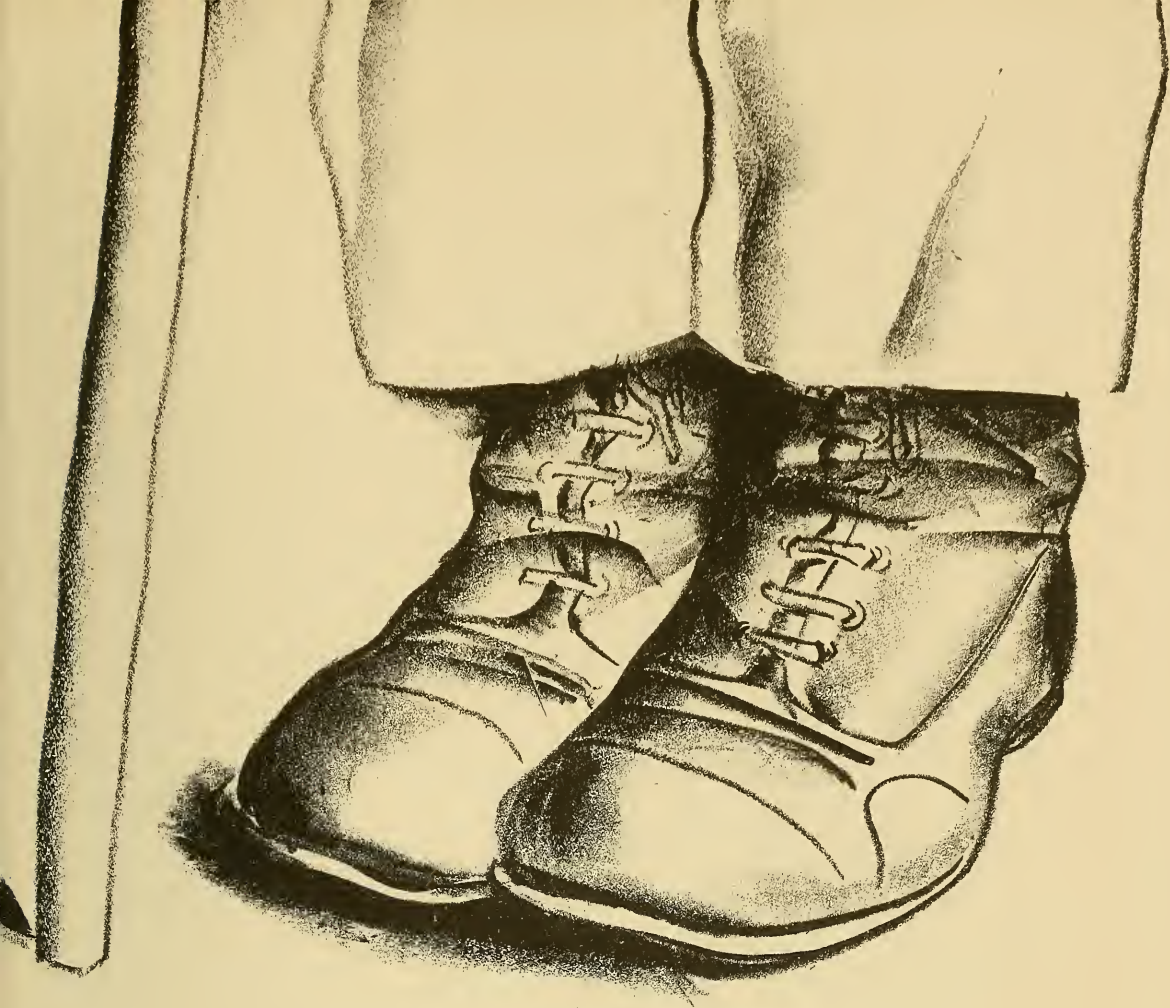


NO PLACE LIKE HOME

“To let, *To Let*, TO LET”, meets the eye everywhere. Not only skyscrapers, offices, stores, but also apartment houses and dwellings are vacant. According to Mr. Keen, a quarter of a million of comfortable apartments are unoccupied in New York City alone.

Nevertheless, thousands and thousands of men, women and children are homeless! The families of the builders of the skyscraper “live” in miserable hovels of packing cases, driftwood and tar paper, without the most elementary needs of sanitation. Landlords, Mr. Keen explained, have the right to put families into the street if they are unable to pay the rent. Papers are served on them, he said, moving men gather the furniture, bedding and other household goods. They carry them out of the house and pile them on the sidewalk. If the tenant resists eviction, he is arrested. The evicted may be fortunate enough to have friends who will take them in. Otherwise they may join the vast army of the homeless.

In America the home does not seem to be of much importance.



BY-PRODUCTS

HOMELESS children drift across the length and breadth of America. Their parents, victims of unemployment, are unable to provide for them. These children, like hungry beasts, are driven to scour the country in search of food. They are exposed to disease and accident.

I am told that despite efforts to herd these homeless youths into Civilian Concentration Camps, they travel in great numbers, including many girls.

“Will these children outlive the effects of their demoralizing experiences, provided they survive at all?” I asked Mr. Keen. “Are they not deprived of the opportunity to take their places as useful members of society?”

“Not at all,” was the reply. And he handed me a magazine article by an assistant Secretary of War, Harry H. Woodring. In it I read:

“Let me speak frankly! If this country should be threatened with foreign wars, economic chaos or social revolution, the Army has the training, the experience, the organization and the men to support the government. . . The Civilian Concentration Camp mobilization is thus more than a great military achievement; it is a dress rehearsal for the Army’s ability to intervene under constitutional authority in combating the depression. . . . the individual C. C. C. set-up should be eliminated . . . and the whole program taken over by the Army as part of its regular duties.”

Thus America is perfecting a plan for the time when the workers shall no longer be willing to starve, when they shall rebel against hunger. The American government plans to marshal these homeless and disinherited children against their own flesh and blood for the murder of their brothers and parents.



THE PLOW

PLENTY of corn, wheat and rye, plenty of beef, mutton and pork—plenty of all the necessities of life—Mr. Keen explained to me—created a problem in America. The President summoned the best brains in the country to solve this curious problem.

The council of wise men had so much brains among them that they practically monopolized wisdom and were called the “Brain Trust”.

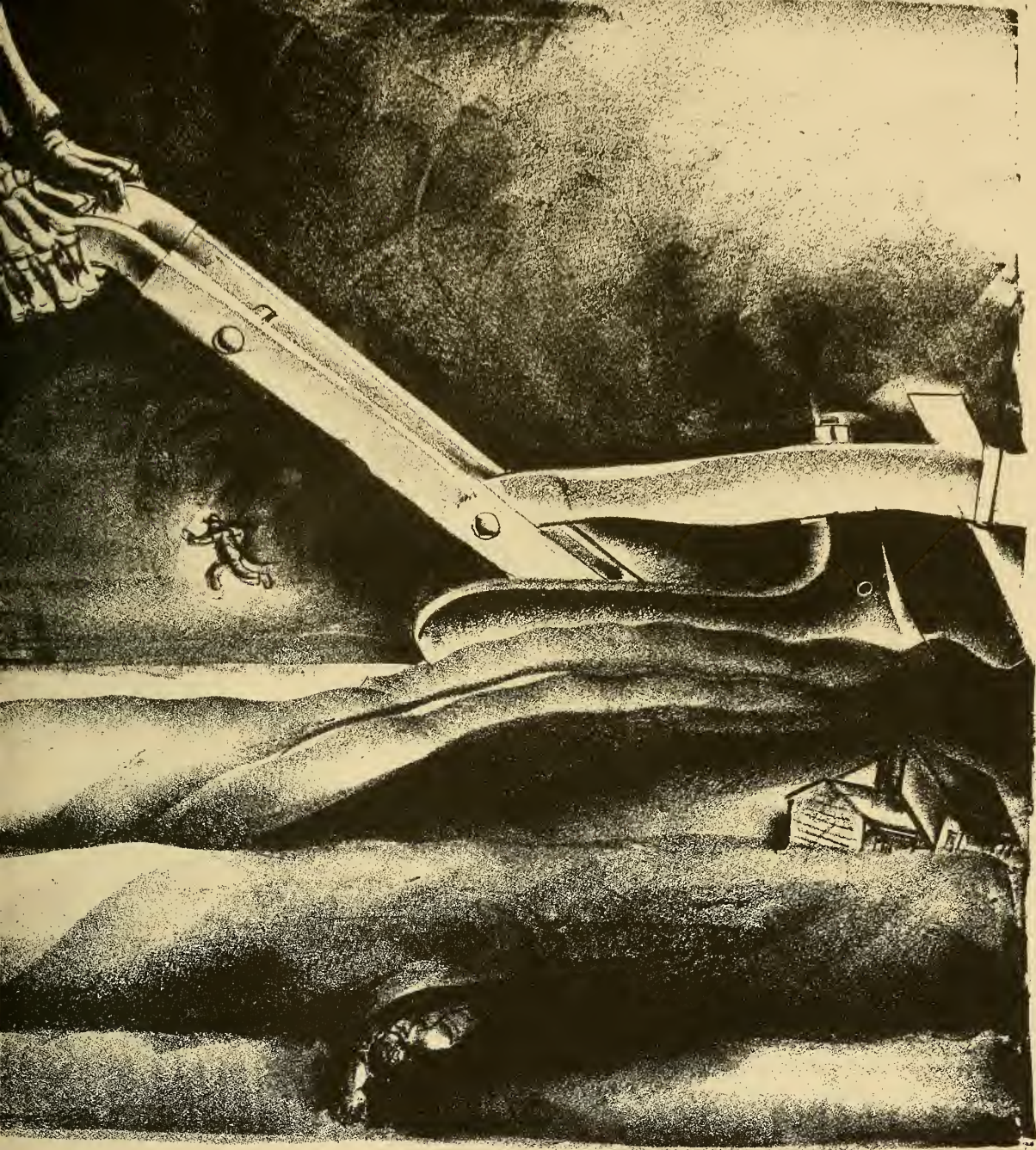
The “Brain Trust” ordered that the grain and other farm products be destroyed and that hogs and cattle, sows and milk cows be slaughtered for fertilizer.

First, they destroyed the crops to create less. Then, they slaughtered the stock for fertilizer to create more. To ordinary humans this would seem illogical. But the members of the “Brain Trust” are not ordinary humans.

In a country where, according to Mr. Keen, a thousand persons die every day of hunger, it would seem natural to utilize the grain, the meat, the milk, the fruit and the vegetables simply as food. This solution, however, would be much too commonplace.

In America I have seen grain left to rot in the field and corn abandoned to the birds. Mother Earth gives in abundance. Grain and corn are wantonly destroyed. The vandals are not punished—they are rewarded! The government of the United States pays those who burn corn and wheat, who plough under the cotton.

In America the plough has become an instrument of destruction.



MIDGETS

I met a Negro poet, a comrade. He had traveled in the Soviet Union and knew a great deal about us. We spent an entire evening together, mostly walking about the lower part of the city. We passed through the world-famed Wall Street, which has a cemetery at one end—and a river at the other. The sidewalk is so narrow we could barely walk two abreast, and we walked in the middle of the street. The buildings are so tall that the street is in eternal shadow. The sky is a mere streak of light above.

Suddenly a man stepped out of a doorway and confronted us.

“What are you doing here?” he asked gruffly.

“We are just walking.”

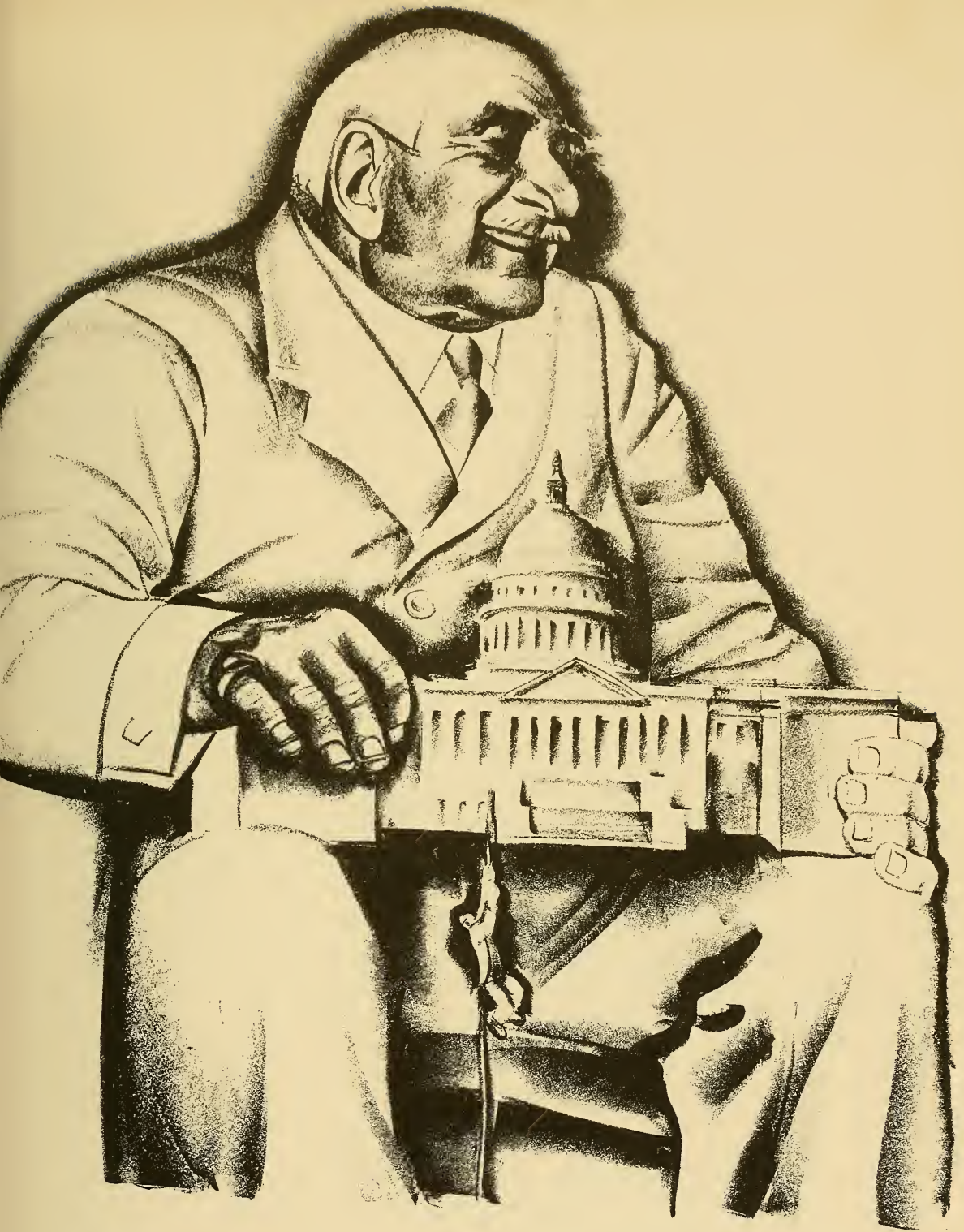
“You’ll have to walk back to where you came from. Can’t walk here.”

Another man appeared to reinforce him. And we were escorted out.

“Watch-dogs of the House of Morgan,” was the first thing my companion said when we were left alone. “I guess it needs watching,” he continued bitterly. When the stock market crashed and the little fellows were sinking, the illusion was spread by the newspapers that the bankers were doing everything possible to help them out. And they did—they helped them out of everything they had. And on top of that, when the banks failed and the middle class lost what it had managed to salvage from the market crash—you never heard such rumblings in your life! The Government had to make a pretense of investigating banking methods.

“J. P. Morgan, the banker, was invited to an exceedingly polite hearing. In the course of this most dignified procedure, a circus midget was dumped into Mr. Morgan’s lap. Detailed accounts of the incident filled the newspapers. It was a huge joke. All America laughed.

“But the joke was on the people. The banker’s lap is always filled with midgets. These midgets spin intrigue and weave the noose. They sit on the Bench and turn the switch of the electric chair. And they are so small, that compared to them that little female midget, who publicly sat in Mr. Morgan’s lap, is a giant . . .”



BLACK AND WHITE

THE fresh air made me hungry and I suggested going in somewhere to eat. But my companion didn't show much enthusiasm. However, I managed to coax him into a lunch wagon. I ordered sandwiches and beer for both of us. The counterman took the order and said in a cold way: "It'll be two bits extra for him."

"Good," I told him, but I didn't understand what he meant by the "two bits extra". I thought perhaps my companion would be getting that much more to eat. But when he brought the order I could see no difference between my portion and his. In fact, my sandwich looked bigger.

I ate heartily. My comrade ate nothing. He barely touched his drink. As I paid, the counterman deliberately smashed my companion's glass. "The two bits extra was for this," he explained, as he tossed the fragments under the counter. "We don't use them after niggers."

"Now you know why I was reluctant to go to any of these places," my companion said as we walked out. "You seemed to be enjoying yourself and I didn't want to spoil your fun. But," he added consolingly, "you mustn't forget we're living under Capitalism, where discrimination and race prejudice are as necessary as wage slavery—one could not exist without the other."

I recalled that we had learned in school that in the days of the Czars in Russia, Jews were segregated, persecuted and murdered. Race prejudice served to keep people apart and prevented them from joining forces against their oppressors. Anti-semitism was proclaimed an "inherent trait" of Russians.

But all superstitions have disappeared with the Czars and all our one hundred and seventy-four nationalities now live in the greatest harmony.



HIGHER MATHEMATICS

A TELEGRAM from Mr. Keen's mother announced her coming from California. I accompanied Mr. Keen to the railroad station to meet her. She seemed far too young for Mr. Keen's mother, in spite of her snow-white hair. She was a matronly woman, pleasant enough, and I was very glad to make her acquaintance.

She brought a lot of luggage and we helped to load it into a hand truck, manned by a Negro worker who wore a red cap. The worker lifted one of the heavy leather trunks and, in the effort, the button of his coat snapped off, disclosing a little jewel, pinned to his vest. It caught Mr. Keen's attention.

"Where did you get that pin?" he asked.

"Worked for it," was the simple answer. I recognized three letters of the Greek alphabet on the pin—Phi, Beta, Kappa.

"What did you major in?" asked Mr. Keen.

"Mathematics," and his white teeth flashed in a broad smile.

"Is this the best job you could get?"

"What else is there open for a Negro?" he said. "I had hoped to teach—occupy a chair at the University of Harvard perhaps. Can't you just see me?" And he burst into mirthless laughter.

As we left him, Mr. Keen explained that the ornament the Negro wore is an insignia of a fraternal organization of university students. Only the most brilliant scholars are eligible for membership in that organization.

America is a strange place indeed. They can spare scientists for the most menial tasks. They can afford to utilize mathematicians as carriers of luggage!



LIVING ART

MR. KEEN'S mother did not put up in her son's apartment, although there was ample room to accommodate her. She preferred to live in a fashionable hotel. Lunch was served in her apartment there. During the conversation I gathered that she owned a town-house in Boston, a seashore estate in California, a château near Paris and a villa in Switzerland, all of which were kept ready for her at all times.

A buxom lady, a banker's wife, who was also present, announced her latest flair for Art. She said it all started with her Mexican hairless pup, Cucaracha.

"Poor Cucaracha was sick and fed up with dog biscuits of the same old shape," she simpered. Then she explained that she had decided to study at the studio of a noted sculptor in order to be able to model dog biscuits of widely varied forms and shapes. "At the same time, wasn't it simply thrilling to discover such a grand medium of self expression!" she said, much pleased with herself.

She then explained that she had leased the studio of the noted sculptor—who was about to be evicted, and said: "Now I throw parties at the studio and my guests are served cocktails and biscuits—each and every biscuit an individual creation—a work of ART."



ART NEWS

I READ this most perplexing and astonishing report in a New York newspaper:

“At the Coq Rouge last night, one saw dreams instead of dreaming them.

“Everyone was bidding farewell to Salvador and Mme. Dali, Salvador being a Surrealist painter. . . .

“Surrealist means more than realist, and in Mr. Dali’s case it appears to carry the idea that when you ask Mr. Dali what a painting means, he replies: ‘You’re asking me?’ One of his paintings may be a mammoth watch, hanging over a tree by the ocean—the artist’s dream at the moment. . . .

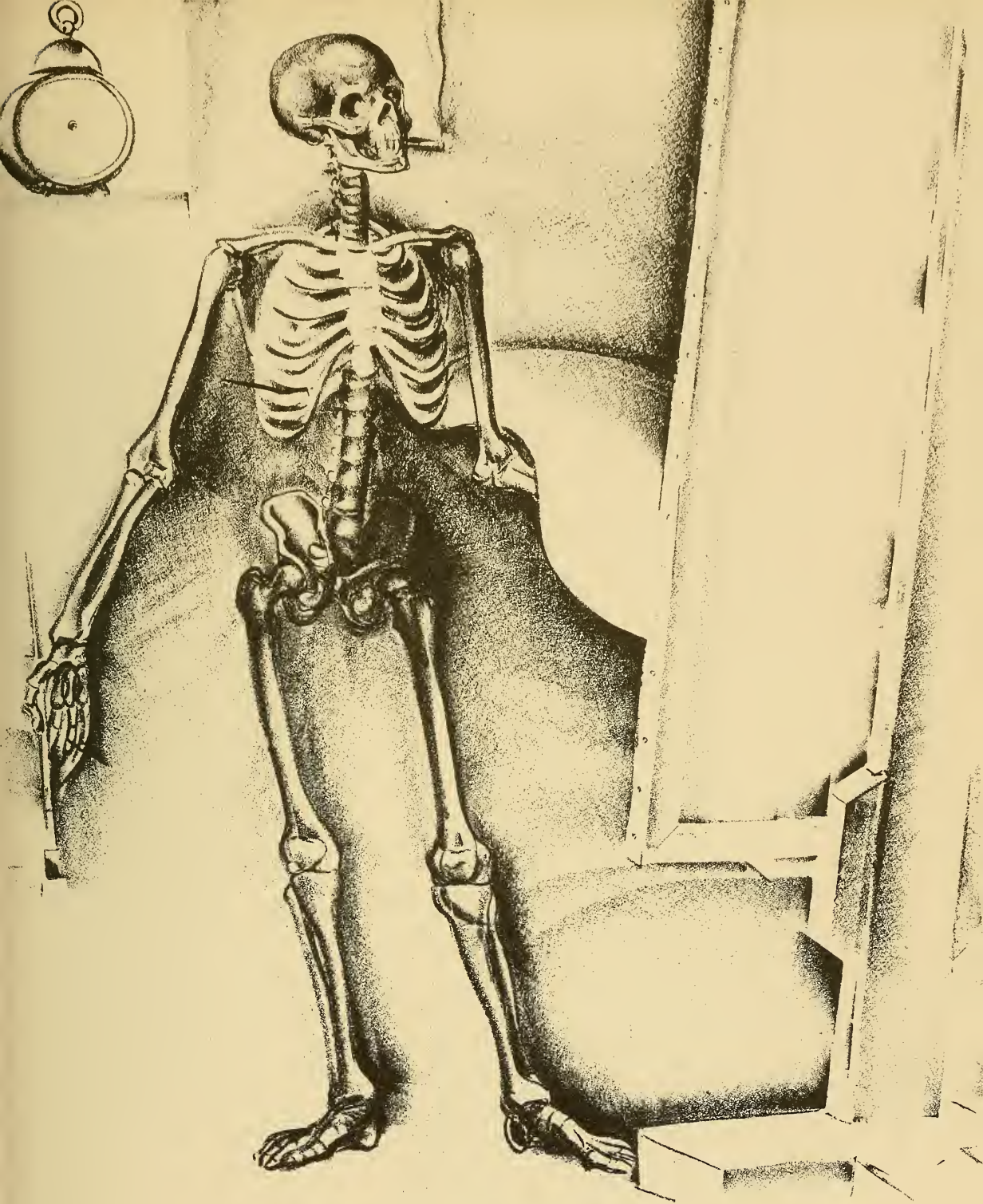
“Mrs. Dali represented Necrophilia (excessive fondness for dead bodies). Topped by images of a lobster and a baby’s head, the artist’s wife was otherwise clad chiefly in a skirt of transparent red paper.

“Dali himself out-Dali-ed the party. In a glass case on his chest was displayed a woman’s brassière.

“The promise that some of the men would come without trousers was more than fulfilled. Tony Williams turned up in a tail coat, with little else than a pair of woman’s stockings held up by woman’s garters. . . .

“There was even a quickly passing vision of a woman whose friends discovered, when she removed her wrap, that in her dream she had forgotten entirely the upper portion of her costume, and rushed her immediately to the less frequented recesses of the Coq Rouge. . . .

“Center of interest was a large dead raw steer, slit down the middle, with a victrola inside—a real steer and not a picture—very Dali.”



PATRONAGE

EVER since I arrived in New York I had a hankering for a ride on top of one of those double-decked busses in which passengers ride about town in the open air. One sunny Spring afternoon I was seated atop of one. A very beautiful girl was seated in front of me. A young fellow tipped his hat very gallantly and bent over towards her: "Pardon, but haven't we met before?" She looked up at him. "Don't I know you from Boston?" She did not answer. "Didn't I meet you at the Brown game?" Still she would not answer. "Oh, but I'm certain we met somewhere! No?" "No," said she, "I'm positive we have not!" "Well, well," said he, "where have you been all my life?" Quite unexpectedly the girl slapped his face so you could hear it. As the gallant retired, I laughed so loud the girl turned on me indignantly. "Oh no, we never met!" I hastened to tell her. She burst into laughter. Then I sat beside her. She told me she was on her way to Rockefeller Center. We went together.

It was a group of buildings large enough to house the population of an entire city. I wasn't much impressed by the decorative details, but I liked the simple lines and massing of the buildings.

We entered the tallest one in the center of the group. A large white wall faced us. On either side of it long corridors were decorated with pictures. "How strange," I remarked, "they put pictures where you can't see them and this big space, in the light, remains blank."

"That too had a picture—a fresco. Didn't you hear about it?" the girl said. I shook my head. "Yes, a picture of a countryman of yours—Lenin."

"A picture of Lenin, what happened to it?" I asked in amazement.

"It was destroyed."

"Why, wasn't it any good?"

"It must have been good, they paid twenty thousand dollars for it."

"Why was it destroyed then?"

"Oh, Mr. Rockefeller didn't like it."

"Who is Mr. Rockefeller?"

"He's the richest man in the world. He's an art patron."

"Did you ever hear of our great art patron of the good old days—Czar Ivan the Terrible?" I asked.

"Yes, what about him?"

"Well, he put out the eyes of his favorite architect to prevent him from creating other buildings that might rival the beauty of the Basilica built for him."

"Oh, but we're living in a civilized country. Here we only destroy the work of the artist," the girl slowly remarked.



MILLIONS

THE beautiful American girl invited me to her home for dinner. Her brother and her school chum, who seemed much interested in each other, made four of us at the table. We had not much of a chance to get acquainted. We had hardly finished dinner when my friend was called to the telephone. She returned somewhat disturbed. "I'll have to rush off immediately," she said, "I received a hurry call. Do you want to come along?"

We all rode down together in the swiftly moving subway train. The brother and the girl left us on the way. They went to the theatre.

When I was alone with the girl she told me that the telephone call came from a woman who used to work for her mother. She had called for help. A neighbor's baby was ill and badly in need of a doctor. My friend had already left word for her doctor to join us at the bedside of the sick child.

After we emerged from the subway we walked a considerable distance along streets lined with carts. Vegetables, fruits, clothing, curtains—everything that we buy in co-operative stores at home—were displayed in the narrow streets crowded with people.

"Here we are," she said finally, and I followed her into an alley and up a flight of stairs. The stench in the dark hallway was sickening. She knocked on a door, a woman appeared. "Oh, Miss, you're an angel to come so quickly. I didn't know who to turn to," she said. "I've called and called the Relief for a doctor. You know what they told me? To stop bothering them. Of all things!" We walked inside. Another woman lay on a cot with a baby and children played about the bare floor. The woman who met us at the door continued indignantly: "They said that this is not the only baby in the world! The doctor will come when he gets around to it! The baby ain't eat nothing for two days—can't hold a thing on its stomach—looks like a skeleton. Are they waiting till he dies before they come?"

My friend's doctor arrived and examined the baby and wrote out a prescription. On his way out he said to us: "I don't see much that I can do. A well nourished child would have a chance but *its* life is just hanging by a thread."

"Sure," exclaimed the woman bitterly. "This ain't no Lindbergh baby! No one is going to be tried for its murder! So what do they care! That's the way they treat us poor folks. They think we're just so much dirt under their feet. . . ."



PEDIGREE

AS we had agreed the night before, bright and early the next morning the American girl and I went back to the child. The father, the neighbor woman, the doctor—they all were there—but it was too late. “No use wasting tears on the child now,” the doctor told the father, “it’s your wife you have to worry about. She needs care—good food. . . .”

“Care, good food—all out of relief, huh?” the man said bitterly. “When I complained about starving they called me a Red. Told me to keep my trap shut or I wouldn’t get nothing! Sure, I know what the wife needs. I know why we lost the kid. I don’t need a doctor to tell me that you got to have milk and orange juice and cod-liver oil and good nourishing food! Milk, 17 cents a quart, eggs 40 cents a dozen and butter, I don’t even know what it sells for! But you go try to get it all! And maybe fresh air and sunshine wouldn’t do any harm either. We get plenty here, don’t we?” He waved his hand about the room.

“They let a mite starve to death!” the neighbor woman said through her tears. “They ain’t got a heart. A human being left to die. They treat dogs better than that! I once worked for a woman, she had special cooked food for the dog. When he didn’t eat so good the doctor came in a rush. When the critter died they bought a bronze coffin for him. They bought a plot for him in the dog cemetery and put a carved tombstone on its grave. And maybe Potter’s field for the baby . . .” She began to sob.

Potter’s field, it seems, is a place in which the poor are buried in unmarked graves. There are many such places in the United States, the American girl told me—at least one to every town and city.

DODO

1923 - 1932



NOT AN UNKNOWN SOLDIER

“SHINE?” asked a man as I walked across a square. He placed a little box at my feet and knelt down. He lifted my right foot onto his box and began to brush my shoe.

“How are you making out?” I asked, trying to be friendly.

“I am just thinking of buying that house,” he answered, and pointed to a skyscraper. “If they ever find out that I shine shoes, I’ll lose my relief. But what can a guy do?”

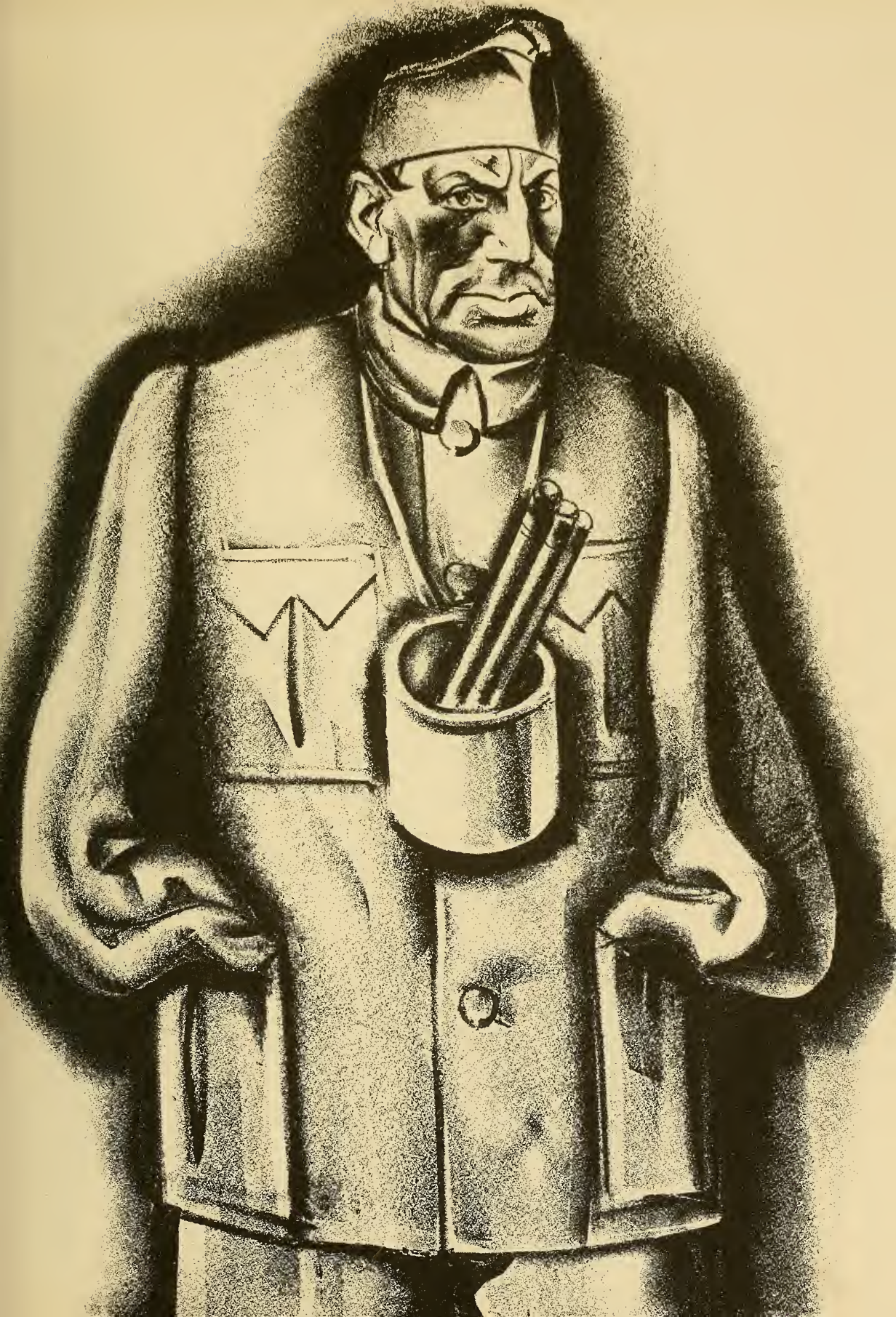
“How much do the relief people give you?”

“Twenty bucks a month for the wife and the kids and me. Hell of a lot, for the four of us! They tell me I ought to be thankful for *that*. Yeah, thankful. . .”

“While me and my buddies were ‘Over There’, the fat boys ‘did their bit’ piling up the dough. When we jobless veterans marched to Washington for the measly bonus they promised us, we ex-soldiers, for whom nothing was good enough back in ’17, what did we get? Poison gas, bayonets—they drove us out like dogs!” He polished my shoes furiously.

“But we had Hoover then. Now, we got Roosevelt. He’s accommodating. Built us barracks. Sent his wife around. While she gave us a song and dance, he pinched a half billion off the disabled veterans’ relief!”

“What the hell did we fight for?” He looked up at me. “We thought we were saving the world from the Heinie. We thought he was our enemy. What saps we were!” And he shot out an energetic spittle on the cement walk.



ON OUR WAY

“NEW YORK isn’t the United States,” said Mr. Keen one day. “Let’s take the old jitney and have a look around the country.”

One morning at daybreak we started out. We drove into a tunnel on one side of the Hudson river and came out on the other side, in another State!

Speeding southward we mounted an ‘aerial’ highway which stretched for miles and miles. It bridged city after city, over which we passed.

A red light stopped us at a crossing. A seedy looking man approached and asked us for a lift. I instinctively opened the door and moved over to make room for him. The man jumped in. Mr. Keen didn’t seem to like it.

For a while we drove along in silence, then Mr. Keen said:

“How far are you going?”

“To tell you the truth, I really don’t know,” said the man. I looked at him in astonishment. Then he said: “You see, I have no place to go to.”

“Out of a job, huh?” asked Mr. Keen.

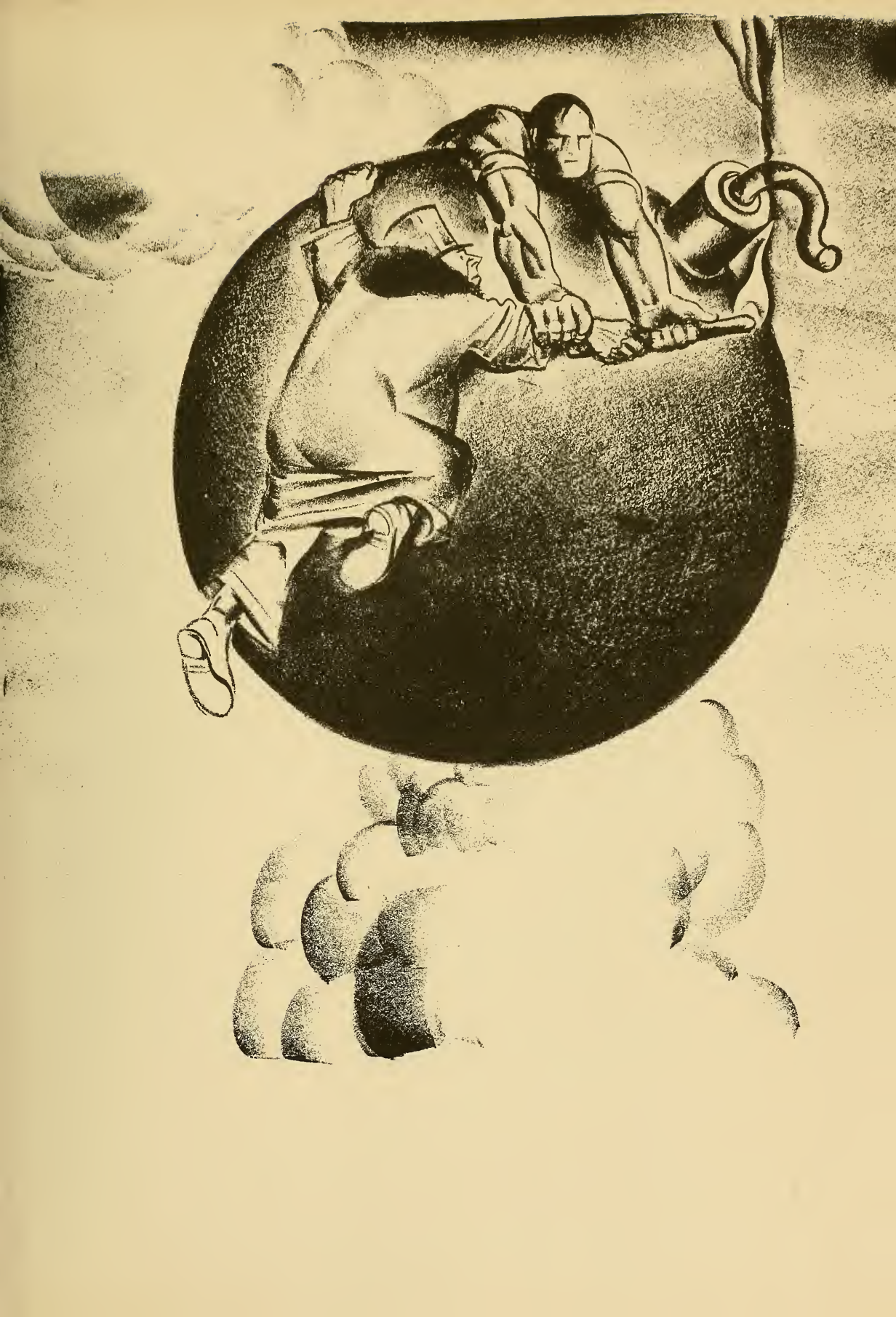
“Yep, I was too good.”

I thought he was joking, but his voice didn’t sound like Americans when they joke.

“I worked for a big manufacturer as chief engineer,” he explained. “I was their expert on electric bulbs. I made them so well that the life of the bulb was practically unlimited. You know what that means? The company fired me. They got another guy; he was not so ambitious. He made them a bulb that would wear out sooner—without fail. And that’s not all. You should see their warehouses! Loaded with models of patents that they buy up left and right to keep them off the market. Well, after all, those are only the fat guys who are out solely to make money. But, when you get your own fellow professionals, other engineers, scientists coming out with proposals to place a ban on all inventions for the next fifty years—*then* you realize what you’re up against.”

“Well,” said Mr. Keen, “they still build good roads. And did you see that tunnel we came through?”

“Sure,” said the man, “they are building roads. They are building tunnels. They are building battleships too and aeroplanes and bigger and better guns. Roosevelt just appropriated two and a half billion dollars for the coming war. As Coolidge said: ‘We can’t afford both civilization and war.’ So the Hell with civilization!”



MIRACLE MAKERS

IN the Pennsylvania steel country, a glass case stands at the entrance to one of the mills. In it dainty boxes are displayed—ladies' powder boxes, boxes for sweets, each painted with pictures of pretty flowers and birds. A sign reads: "Every article in this case is made of our tin plates."

We continued on into the mill.

A man knocked the mouth of a blast furnace open. A thunderous roar, a blinding flash, and the molten ore burst forth! It flowed through grooves into waiting ladles. Heavy sulphurous fumes filled the air. Men hustled about poking into the grooves to prevent the metal from clogging. A mis-step and a foot is lost. It melts away like snow flakes on a window pane.

When the ladle was full, they covered it with a shovel full of fine coal. A thousand stars shot into the air as the coal touched the golden liquid!

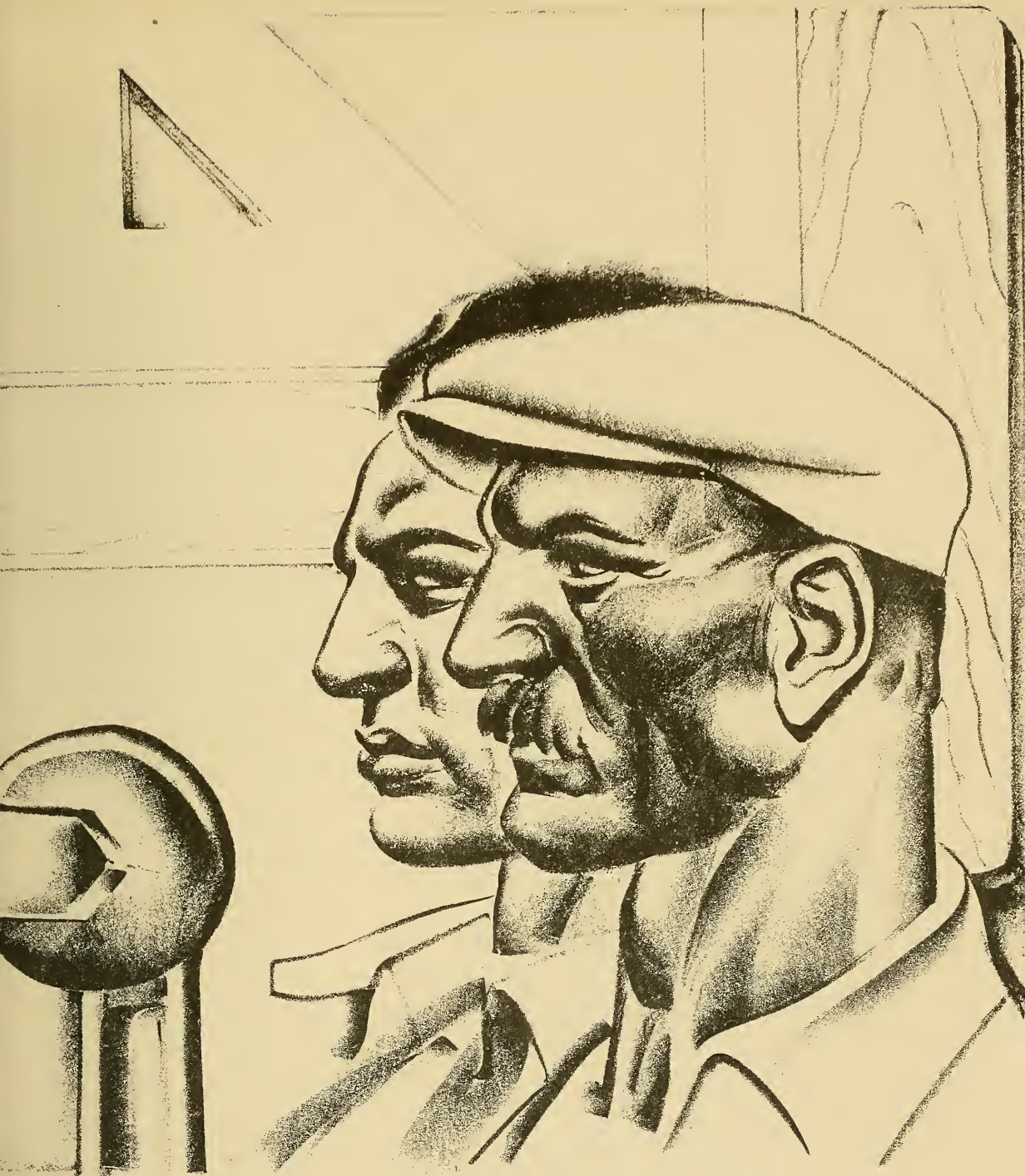
In the rolling mills a man delved into the furnace. With a long rod he yanked the red hot pig iron onto a flat topped car. Another man wheeled the pig iron to the roller. A deft jerk and the gleaming iron slipped into the jaws of the roller. A loud roar and shooting sparks bombarded the quickly turned back of the worker.

As we came out at the river side of the plant, we saw flat-bottomed scows swaying at their moorings. Great electric shovels suspended on overhead cranes swooped down and bit into their cargo. Huge magnets lifted a ton of pig iron and disposed of it, at will. Freight cars were hoisted into mid-air, turned over, emptied and replaced on the rails again. Steam hammers boomed the heroic song of labor, shaping iron like butter. Machines made wire and sheets of steel—and machines made machines!

Machines, living architecture, the miracle of man! Created by him to make himself Master of the earth, the sea and the sky.

On our way back to Mr. Keen's car, I remarked: "I would think that I was back at home, at Magnitorsk, only there there are so many chimneys without smoke, and modern apartment houses for workers, with club-houses, children's nurseries and playgrounds."

"But, where have you these things in the Soviet Union?" Mr. Keen said with a grin and he pointed to the powder boxes in the glass case.



PICKING UP

IN the beautiful Shenandoah Valley we lost our way in a storm. Rain came down in torrents. We crawled along slowly on a muddy road. We saw a light ahead and Mr. Keen suggested that it would be best to try to put up there for the night. On the side of a hill we came upon a house surrounded by giant trees.

Mr. Keen blew his horn. A man appeared on the sheltered porch carrying a lantern. "Could you put us up for the night?" shouted Mr. Keen. The man waved to us to come. "Gee," exclaimed Mr. Keen as we got inside, "look at those hand-hewn oak beams. And look at that fire place! Haven't seen anything like them for a long time. You've got some house. Must be older than any of us here."

"Older than any of us?" the owner exclaimed. "It's almost as old as my great-great-grandfather, who built it. He was the first of the settlers in these parts. He had to clear the Indians off before he could touch the land."

"And your people have been in this house ever since?" asked Mr. Keen.

"Sure have."

"I guess it'll last your tribe another five generations."

The man turned away and after a moment's silence he answered: "Reckon not. I'll be out of here within a month."

"You selling the old place?"

"No. The bank is taking it. The old gent, I reckon, would turn over in his grave! He got the place from the Indian Chief, White Eagle."

"A gift?"

"No, a swap. The Chief came to the old man and offered his peace pipe—that's the kind of a man built this house! The Chief had his eye on a white stallion that belonged to my folks. He said he dreamed they gave him the stallion for a gift. The think-box of the old man thunk fast. He said 'sure' he believed in dreams—he dreamed too. Dreamed that White Eagle gave him all the land in this Valley—that's what he told the Indian Chief. And they squatted right here, where the house stands, for a long long time, saying nothing. Then White Eagle got to his feet and said, 'Pale Face, dream no more.' And he and his braves, leading the white stallion, left this place forever.

"My folk fought for this land, risked their lives. They plowed with one hand and held the gun in the other. Sleek banker fellers been takin' it piece at a time—and now they take the last patch of land with the house . . ."

"White Eagle giveth and Blue Eagle taketh away," remarked Mr. Keen and smiled.

But the farmer didn't see anything funny in Mr. Keen's pun.



THE MASTER WEAVER

ON the Carolina Piedmont Plateau we drove along a country road skirted by a high wire fence. Around a bend we were confronted by a huge iron gate. A one-armed watchman said: "Pass, please!"

"Pass? What have you got in there anyway?" asked Mr. Keen.

"Weaver Textile Mills. Can't get in without a pass. Sorry, I got my orders."

"Want to go in?" Mr. Keen asked me. I was curious and I nodded.

"Is the superintendent around?" Mr. Keen asked the man.

"Yes, sir. In the big house, down the end of that lane."

"All right, let's go to see him. Jump on the running board."

At the house, the watchman rang the door bell and Mr. Keen joined him. A girl appeared and Mr. Keen was ushered in. The watchman came back to the car.

I asked him several questions about the place, but he seemed reluctant to give me any information. I tried to reassure him: "I hope my Boss doesn't take too long," I said.

"Oh, he's your Boss, eh? I was thinking you was one of the swells yourself." We both laughed.

"You want to know what kind of a place this is? I'll tell you. See that fence you just come through? Everything on this side of that fence belongs to one man. He owns the land, the mill, he owns these houses, he owns the church, he owns the school, he owns everybody in them. Man, woman and child work for him night and day. We don't get time to comb the lint out of our heads. 'Lint tops', that's what they call us. We're always in debt, and can't get no place except more behind in the books. He owns us body and soul it seems like. Did you see me sitting at the gate there? I ain't sitting there for fun. My job is not only to keep foreigners out, but to keep home folks in."

Mr. Keen came out with the Superintendent and the man hurried back to his gate.

The Superintendent said to me: "I'm sorry, the mills are shut down today. There's nothing there for you to see. Let's see, how would you like to go to church?"

"Oh, we don't want you to trouble," Mr. Keen said.

"No trouble! It's part of my job to go. Mr. Weaver would give me Hell if I missed it. He'll be there himself. You bet! We got to set an example for the workers. Besides, there's a strike down Columbus—couple of miles from here. There'll be a special sermon on that." He looked at his watch. "Come on, I'm late now," he said.



PIE IN THE SKY

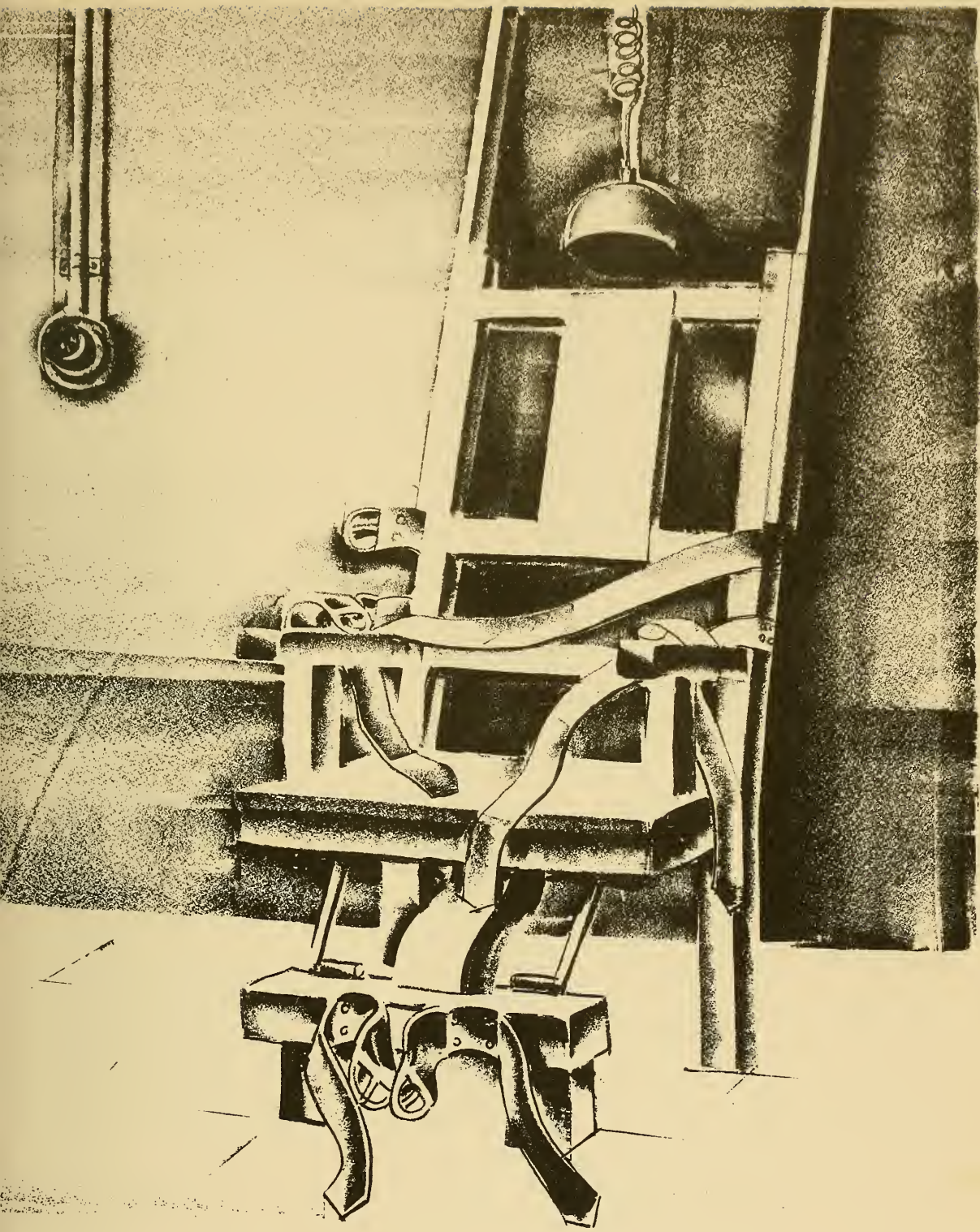
THE little church was filled when we arrived. The people were seated on long, rough-hewn, backless benches arranged in rows facing the platform. A few people, however, sat on chairs with comfortable backs. Their elegant attire contrasted with the rags worn by the others. Even I could tell the mill owner and his family at a glance.

The preacher was standing in his pulpit on the platform addressing the congregation:

“. . . and he brought them down from the mountains. Gave them work, gave them houses to live in. He opened his stores and gave them goods on credit. Just like Mr. Weaver does for you.” He turned to Mr. Weaver and nodded and smiled. Mr. Weaver smiled and nodded back. “He built them schools, churches, just like the one you’re in now, to enable them to give due praise to the Almighty Lord. And how did they repay him? Like snakes in the grass they turned on him!

“Take care that you too do not fret or murmur and bite the hand that’s feeding you. For it will greatly offend the Almighty God, who has by his providence made you laborers because no doubt, He knew what conditions are best for each of us in this world, so as better to help us toward Heaven, if you but do what duty he has assigned you here. Any discontentment on your part is quarelling with your Heavenly Master and finding fault with God Himself, who hath made you what you are and hath promised unto you a large share in the Kingdom of Heaven—a share as great as that of the richest man alive. If you will but behave yourself aright and go about the business He hath set you in this world, honestly, cheerfully and loyally. Riches and power have proven the ruin of many unhappy souls by drawing away their hearts and affections from God and fixing them on mean and sinful enjoyments. So that when God, who knows our hearts better than we know ourselves, sees that they would be hurtful to us and therefore keeps them from us, it is the greatest mercy of kindness he could show us.

“But should you not accept the word of God, death is the wages of disobedience, the everlasting fire prepared by the Devil! It is a fire which shall last forever. And the Devil and all people who will not serve and love God, shall be punished for evermore. The Bible says, ‘The smoke of their torments ascendeth up forever and forever.’ Amen.”



SHARE THE WEALTH

IN a sunbaked cotton field, a Negro woman and half a dozen ragged children shuttled up and down the long rows. Their bodies were bent, and their adept fingers picked the snow-white bolls and placed them into trailing sacks, tied to their waists.

Further along a Negro man tussled with a balky mule. He did some fancy swearing: "Giddap, mule! Whoa, you cussed long eared woods-colt of Beelzebub! Whoa, vermin."

He stopped to straighten the matted trace cords. We walked over. He shook his head mournfully and greeted us with these words: "Hard luck in this family and it all fell on me.

"I whips the hide off that mule but he don't pay no mind. It ain't like it was his fault neither. Year after year I whips him if he gets stumping on the cotton when he is ploughing. Now government man wants us to plough cotton under. I can't explain to the mule how government wants him to get changing his ways. It ain't natural for humans to understand. And he ain't nothing except old mule . . .

"Yessuh, see my wife and children pickin' cotton? That's for the ducks."

"For the ducks?" I exclaimed in astonishment.

"Yessuh, we has peculiar ducks this part of the country. I has to get me credit at Bossman's store for feed and fertilizer. Feed for mule and my family. Then when the crop gets ready Bossman comes, brings me the book: fifteen dollars, ducks for feed. Ten dollars, ducks for fertilizer. Fifteen dollars ducks for feed and potatoes and corn. And by the time ducks get through with my crop, I owe Bossman money."

"Oh, deductions! Is that what you mean?" Mr. Keen asked.

"That's right, ducks," he said. "One year boll weevil, next year Roosevelt and ducks every year. And my share ain't been nothing but the work part."



FREE LABOR

A HUGE steel cage, on wheels, was parked alongside a dusty road in Georgia. It was a contraption such as a circus uses in transporting the most ferocious beasts. But instead of animals I saw black men clothed in stripes, like zebras, locked into them.

A pageant, I thought, a mock ritual of some sort. But the despair in the eyes of the Negroes, who were stretched on tiered metal bunks, belied this.

A villainous looking, armed, white man appeared. He flung the creaking gate of the cage open.

"Come, you niggers!" he cried. "Time! Back to work! Shake a leg there!"

With difficulty, because of the chain dragging on the ankle of each, the Negroes filed out. They were marched up the road. At the bend was a pile of picks and shovels. Each took one and commenced to hack away at the red soil.

"What are these men in chains for?" I asked the guard.

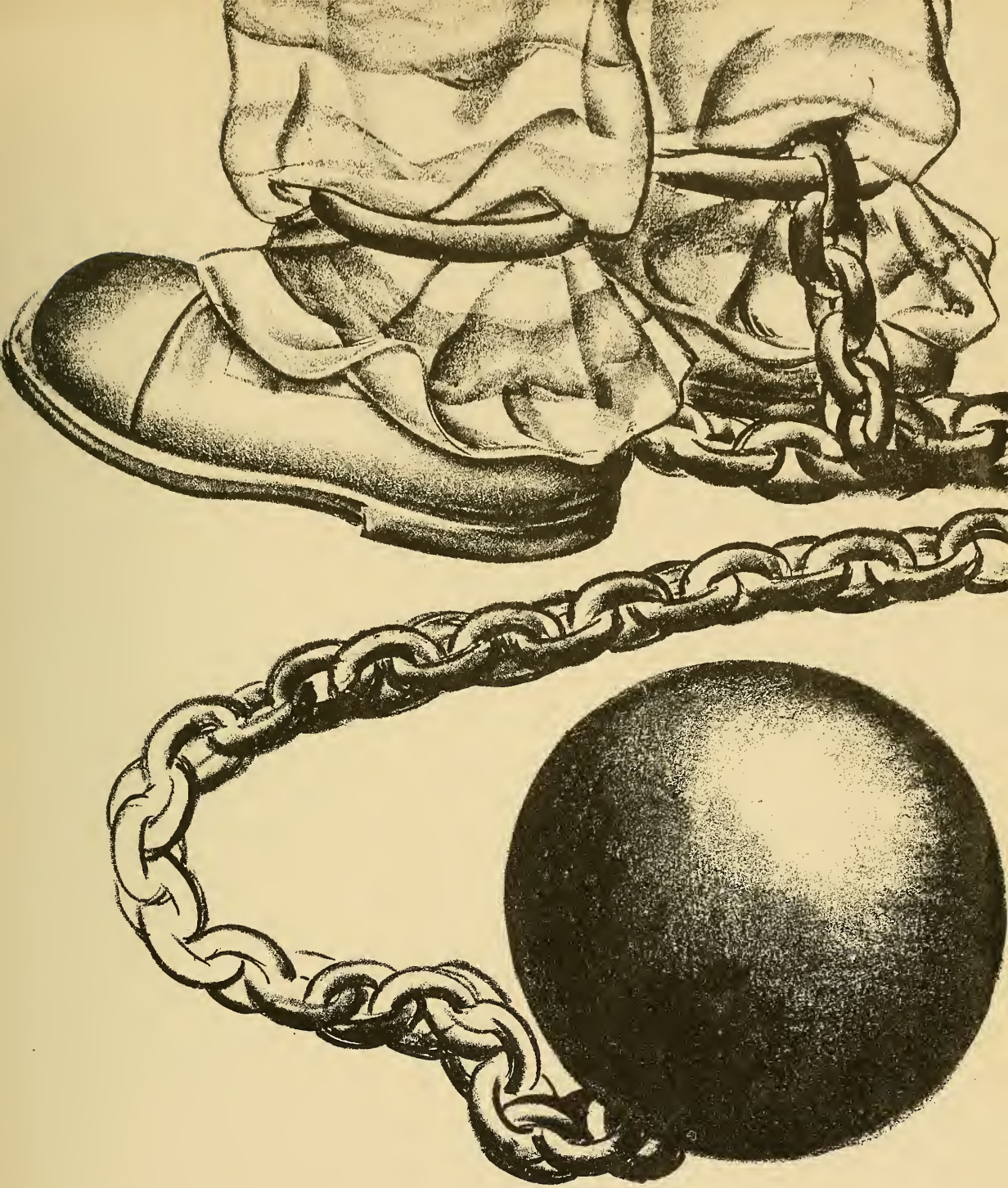
"Work. And I am here to make them."

"But what have they done?"

"Don't know nothing about that an' don't care," he said carelessly. "When I wants niggers, I pass the word to the office. If they have none, they get them. Sheriff can take him a walk anytime and bring in a string. He gets five dollars a head—just for walking down the street and pulling them in. Cinch—ain't it? Wish I had his job!"

"You mean, some of them have not done anything—committed no crime?"

"If they ain't done nothing," the guard said with a scowl, "then cinch they have done something before and got away with it. Or will sooner or later. All niggers is criminals. Naturally mean—anyway, can't dig no roads down here without niggers, can we? And we got to keep getting fresh ones all the time—niggers ain't hardly civilized no how."



STAKE IN THE COMMONWEALTH

ON our way North, as we came near to the Carolinas, we were hailed by a man who stepped out of a car parked on the roadside. Mr. Keen stopped so suddenly I bumped my chin on the dash board. The man walked up to us. "Would you mind giving me a lift to the next garage?" And without waiting for an answer, he opened the door and sat down beside me. He was a large man and took up a lot of room and I had to squeeze up close to Mr. Keen.

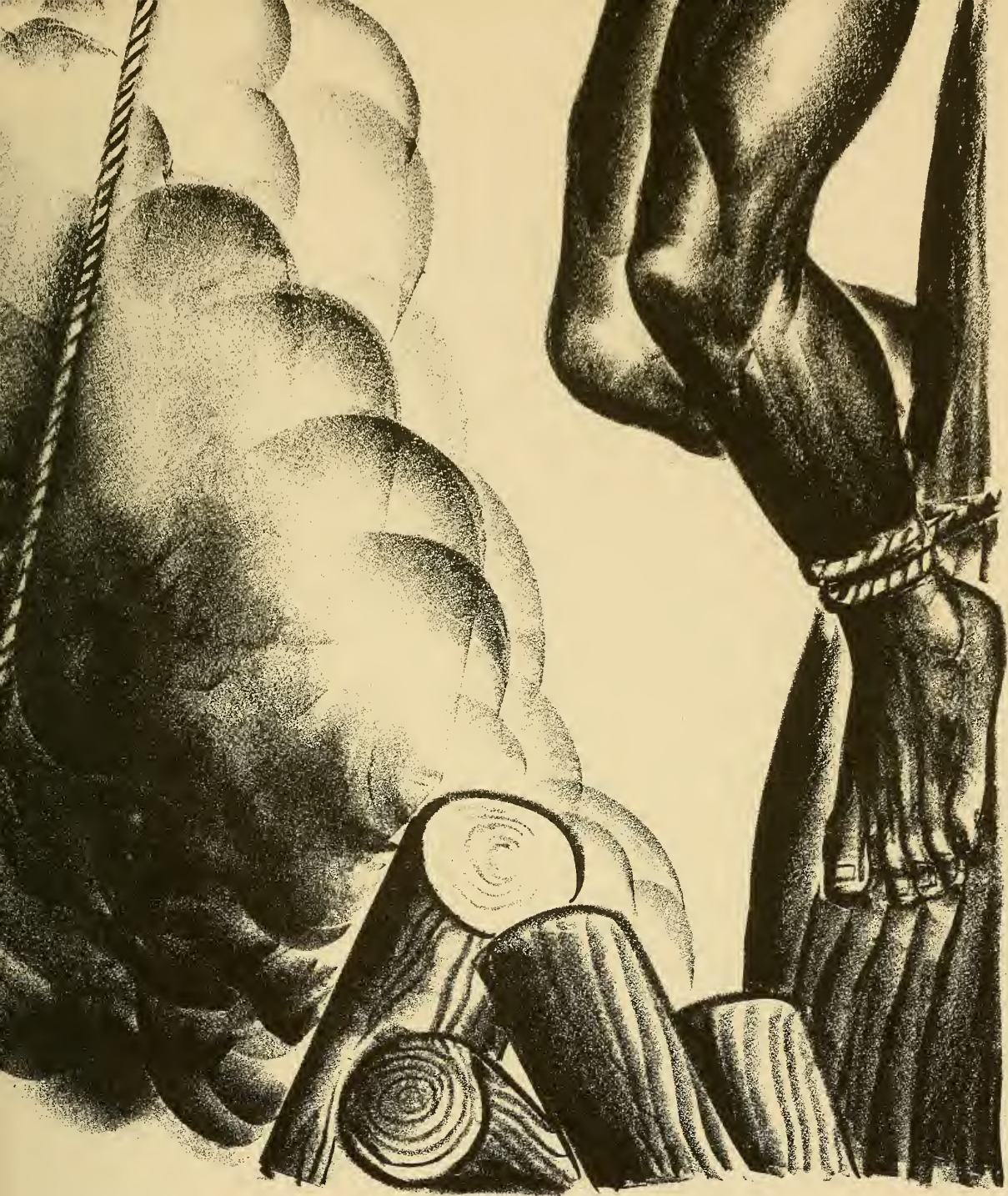
"We sure had us a hot time last night! Forgot to get gas," he exclaimed. He rummaged around in his pocket a moment and produced a badly stained piece of paper. "Look heah," he said and uncovered its contents triumphantly. To me it looked like a chunk of calf's liver, but when I examined it more closely, to my horror, I recognised a finger nail on it. "Well it don't look so pretty now, I'll git dryin' it in the sun," he announced. "It'll look different when I git puttin' it on my watch chain. We did us a little job last night. Nigger uplift. The black bastard! Gave him a chanct to be uppity on the end of a rope." And he chuckled.

Mr. Keen drove faster than I had ever known him to ride. I surmised that he was heading for a lunatic asylum to return the escaped inmate.

"Nigger," the man snarled, "organizin'! Can you beat that? A share croppers' union—what's the country comin' to! They'll be wantin' the vote next. The black bastard sure was one bad nigger! Fought like a wild cat! We sure burned up a pile of wood! We kept him burnin' forty-five minutes by the watch—but his lights went out. We saw to that! There's one less bad nigger in the world." He spoke with genuine satisfaction. To my great surprise, Mr. Keen stopped at a garage and the dangerous lunatic stepped out of the car and pleasantly thanked him for the lift.

I looked at Mr. Keen puzzled. "Why, it's criminal to allow such a lunatic at large!" I told him.

"The man is not a lunatic," Mr. Keen replied, "he's one of our Southern landlords."



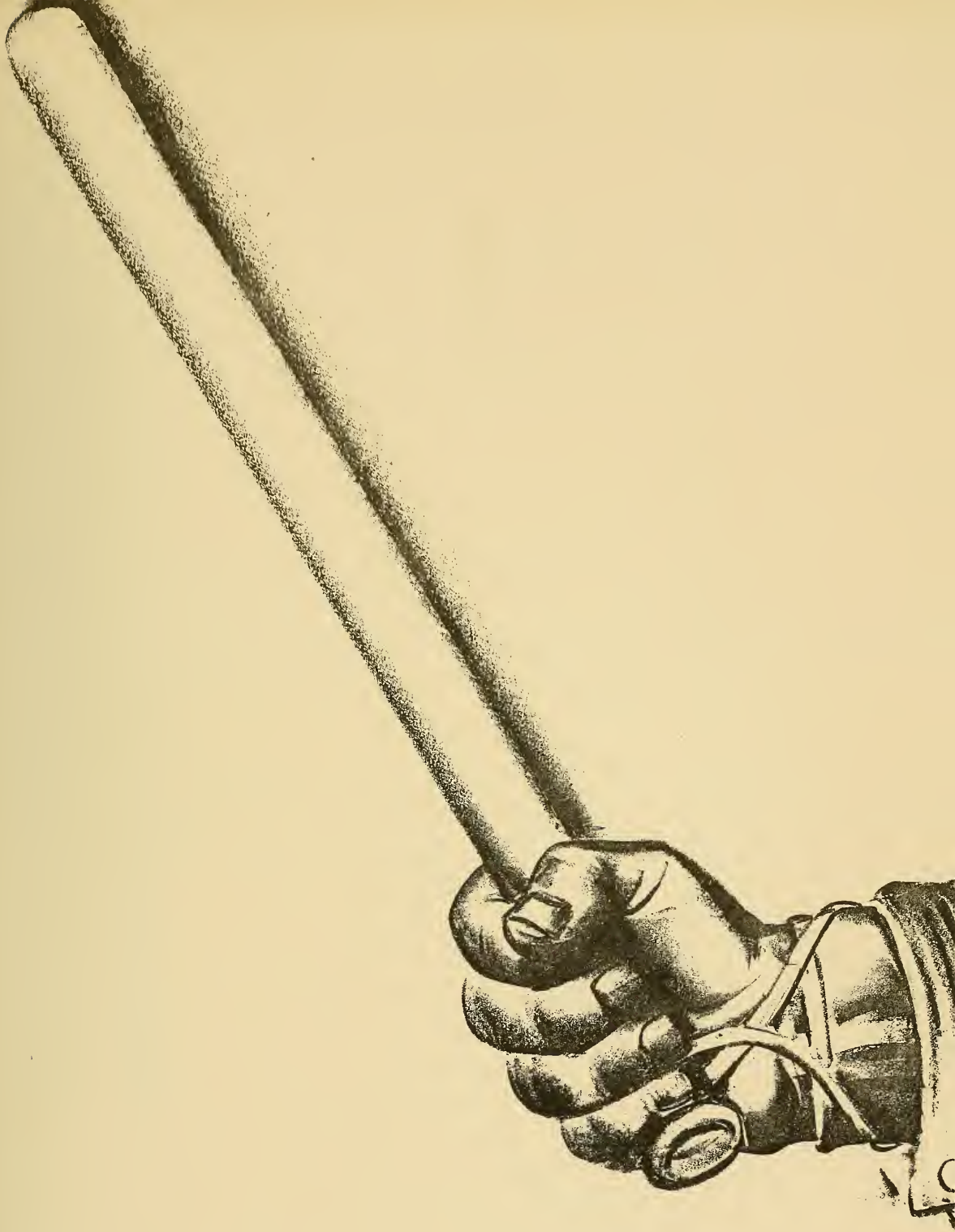
LAW AND ORDER

BACK in New York I saw men and women marching in the street. Workers, they clamored to be permitted to work. They came to City Hall. It was surrounded by policemen, some mounted and some afoot. Suddenly the police attacked and beat the workers. Horses trampled them. Many were arrested. This is considered to be the proper reward for their eagerness to be useful!

Right beside me a policeman felled a youth with his club. When he raised his club to strike another blow at the kneeling figure, I grabbed his stick. I was suddenly set upon. Dazed by blows, I was hustled away. At Headquarters they pummeled me for all they were worth. I felt the warm blood ooze from my forehead, blurring my vision. Like an animal I was on all fours. In desperation I crawled under a table for shelter. A terrific kick in my face—and I lost consciousness.

Next thing, I heard a voice: "Give him the water test, the son-of-a-bitch is making believe! They ducked my head into a bucket of water. I have good lungs. I held my breath for many seconds. "He's out all right," one declared disgustedly and kicked me aside. "Bring in the next one!"

Those who in our country would be honored as Shock Brigaders of Labor, and decorated with the Order of Lenin, are treated thus in America.



CORNER STONE

I WAS thrown into a cell. The next day, with a dozen other prisoners, I was transferred to another jail. Here we were locked into a huge cage which already held a score of prisoners, all of them victims of the same police attack.

A worker, a giant, had his head swathed in bandages. During the attack he held off six policemen single-handed. What they gave him in the station house would surely have killed any one else. Most of us were pretty badly mauled.

And now they were holding us on charges of assault!

One of the prisoners, a small fellow, drew a large and derisive cartoon of the police on the prison wall, much to our amusement.

When we were taken before the judge, he set the bail so high that sufficient funds could not be raised to bail all of us out of jail. Our decision was unanimous: *None* would go if *all* couldn't. Mr. Keen, however, was able to make up the shortage and we were free—awaiting trial.

He told me that, in all probability, since I was a foreigner, I would be shipped out of the country.



LIFE, LIBERTY . . .

INSTEAD of driving to his home from the jail, Mr. Keen took me directly to his doctor. He was a kindly, gray-haired man. Mr. Keen told him all about me. The doctor laughed while he was dressing my wound. "So you had to come all the way from Russia to get an acute case of Capitalism," he said. "Well, I guess you are lucky at that. At least I can fix *you* up. I had another, a more serious case, a few minutes before you came, a girl. She complained about violent fits of indigestion. Damned if there was anything wrong with her stomach.

"You interested, Keen? I'll tell you about her.

"She is about 25 years old and a stenographer. She worked in a law office for eight years. It was her first job. Six years ago she met John, a bookkeeper. They decided to get married but had to wait till they could afford it. He lost his job five years ago and hasn't worked since. Then she too lost her job and later got another as a houseworker and does the washing and cooking. Her pay is thirty dollars a month and she feels lucky to get that. She meets John once a week on her day off.

"That's not all. She has a sister, a school teacher. *Her* beau, too, is out of work. She can't get married either. It is written in her school contract that marriage forfeits her job.

"The neighbors talk about them. They say they're already married. But the girl denies it.

"Down in Union Square, comrade Gulliver, they tell me they have a name for this ailment. They call it 'Chronic Capitalism.' " And he winked at me mischievously. "Poor girl," he added, "there is nothing I can do for her."



... AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

WHEN I first came to America, Mr. Keen cut a little notice out of the paper. He gave it to me to read, which I did. But I couldn't understand it. Later on, however, I began to see that it was a sample of the things that happen in the United States, where I have been told, one person commits suicide every half hour, day and night. The clipping, cut from a newspaper (I omit the name out of consideration for the victim's family) reads:

"Mrs. X a week ago got a job she needed badly. It was her reward for long, weary searching. But it brought no joy to her.

"For the job, which was dress designing, had been obtained at the cost of another woman's discharge.

"All week long Mrs. X brooded over the plight of the other woman. Today, according to police, Mrs. X leaped to her death from the roof of the five-story apartment building where she lived. . . .

"Mrs. X was 39, wife of a professor in the Economics Department in Pennsylvania State College."



PITY THE RICH

ONE evening, as we were preparing to go out, the telephone bell rang. Mr. Keen delightedly told me that an old friend from Chicago was on the way up to the apartment.

"Wait till you see this old duffer," he laughed. "He's one of our millionaires. But a good skate at that. He was my father's bosom friend."

A rather pleasant looking, tall, well-knit man came in and he and Mr. Keen fell into each other's arms, like old friends.

"So you're from Russia, eh, one of them Reds?" he said to me.

I said "yes" and we all laughed, as though that was funny.

"Well, I don't know—one thing *you* don't have to worry about over there is the depression."

"Are *you* losing any sleep over it?" asked Mr. Keen.

"Am I?" he exclaimed. "If you were sleeping on bricks, like I am, you'd be losing sleep too, plenty. Twenty acres of factory in Chicago—if smoke came out of any of the chimneys they'd call the fire department. I hold basic patents—I used to get royalties on every brick made in the country. But what good is brick today except for breaking heads and windows!"

"I left the old home town to go out and make my fortune. I guess it was a mistake. I wish I had stayed home. I could then have been somewhat of a fixture, with a horizon limited to Jim Jones' cow pasture and the outhouse. Republics, Monarchies, Hitlers, Louisiana Kingfishes, Mrs. Roosevelt, Father Coughlins, Townsends—would have come and gone and not disturbed my equinamity any more than that of a quid-chewing cow.

"I never knew I had so many relatives. All needing help. My son, the noted architect, has done nothing in four years! I have to keep him, his wife and three children from going on the relief rolls. He's telling the world he's ready for Communism tomorrow! You know, he's going nuts. Such a capable young fellow, rarin' to be doing things and doomed to inactivity! Like my brick yard. What in hell are we coming to! You know I'm not worried about myself, for old uncle Billy there's always room in the Rich House."

"Rich House?" I asked.

"Yes, we poor rich-people have to look ahead too. What do you think would happen to us if we lost our money? Sure. One of us, an Andrew Freedman, who used to have weird nightmares about having lost his money, insured himself and other poor-rich co-sufferers to enable them to live out their time "in the style to which they were accustomed," regardless of what happens. He built a home for them."

So, in America even the rich, who own everything, are terrified by the threat of insecurity!



SALES FORCE

MR. KEEN drove me up to his farm in Connecticut to spend a couple of days in the country "resting". I wondered what we had been doing all the rest of the time.

His place was a big, rambling white-washed farm house, with beautiful old American furniture in keeping with the lovely old house itself. But it had tiled bathrooms and glistening bathroom fixtures, an automatic hot-water system and all the other conveniences of his apartment in town. The first day men called to sell him vacuum cleaners.

"What the Hell is the matter with you fellows?" Mr. Keen asked the third salesman in exasperation. "You're the third one to-day trying to sell me the same damn vacuum cleaner."

"I'm just trying to make a living," said the salesman, "and I guess I'm not the only one."

"But how can three of you expect to sell me the same vacuum cleaner?"

"Three? There are ten thousand of us trying to sell the same vacuum cleaner, to you or anybody else!"

"Mmm," Mr. Keen grunted appreciatively, "some outfit—they must manufacture millions of those machines."

"No sir, not millions. We have plenty tough time trying to sell the thousand that our factory turns out each day."

"What, only a thousand machines and ten thousand men selling them? Then you're only a small outfit!"

"Oh, I don't know," said the salesman. "We have about two hundred workers."

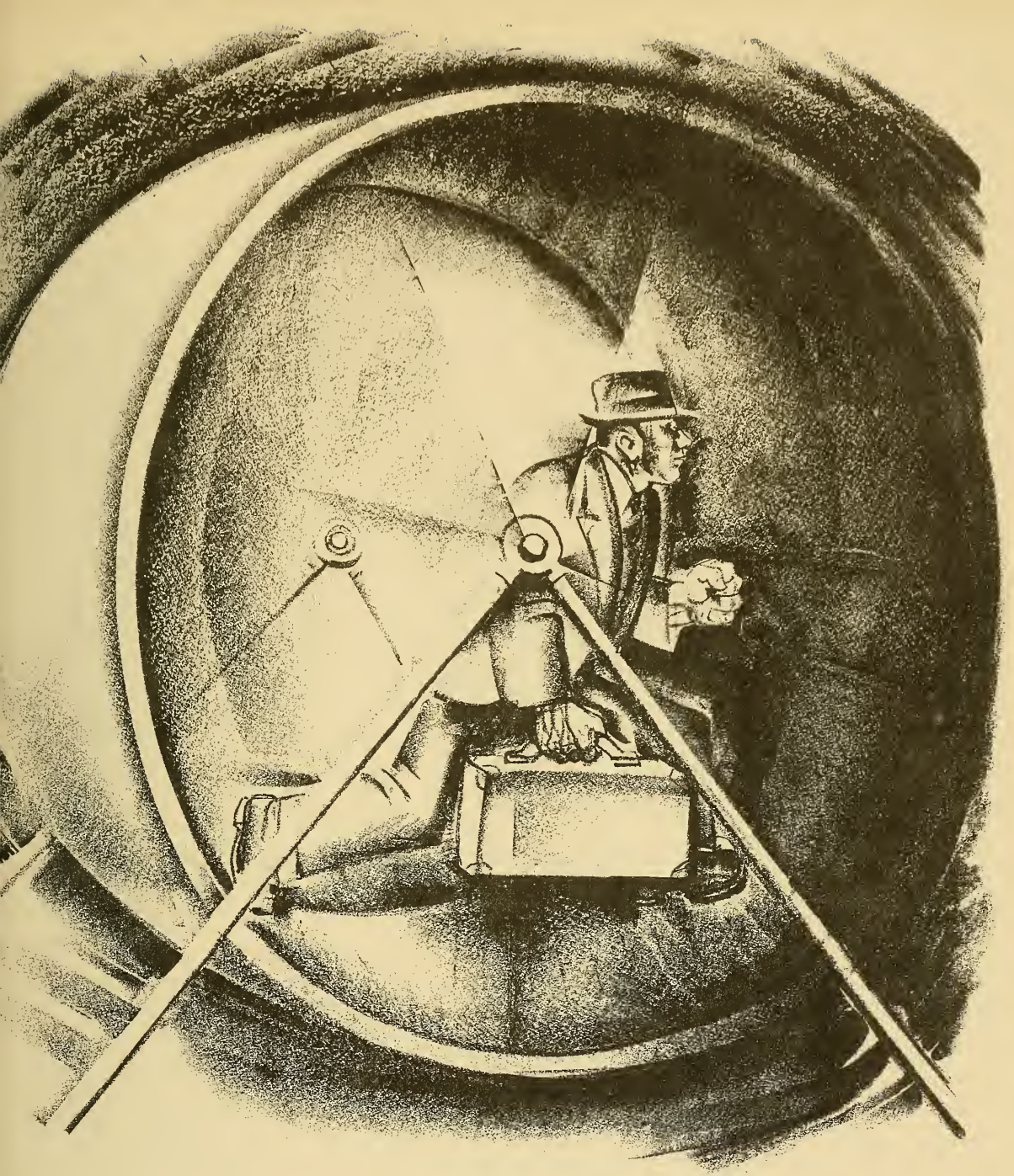
"Two hundred workers? Ten thousand salesmen? Did I hear aright?" I asked in amazement.

"Yes, you heard right," said Mr. Keen laughing. "But that's not all. There's the factory management, office force, warehouses, showrooms, sales management, advertising, the officers of the corporation and the stock holders! Isn't that right?" he asked the salesman.

"I guess so," the man said dispiritedly.

"And all live on the work of two hundred men?" I asked again.

"Depends on what you call a living," said the salesman. "I haven't sold a machine in a month. If it weren't for a fifty cents here and a fifty cents there, cleaning up rugs with my sample vacuum cleaner, I'd starve to death."



DRUMMER BOYS

“WELL,” said Mr. Keen, “it’s Tuesday. How about lunch with the Rotarians?”

“What are the Rotarians?” I asked.

“Oh, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker—people, like myself, who don’t like to eat alone. Come and see for yourself.”

In a good-sized dining room, with flowers on each table, pretty girls flitted hither and thither carrying food to a lot of noisy fat men.

As we took our places, the Chairman arose: “How about our little song? Don’t forget to put pep into it!” He lifted his hand. “All together boys, now!” They all sang:

*“Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag
And smile, smile, smile. . . .”*

They beat an accompaniment with spoons, knives and forks against the plates, a terrific din! “And now,” said the Chairman, “for this fine singing you will be rewarded with a surprise.” He waddled to the door and with a dramatic flourish opened the door and ushered in a group of timid, ragged children. He poked one of them: “Come on, come on,” he coaxed in a stage whisper. The frightened child mumbled something. “Louder!” The child, on the verge of tears: “We thank you for the milk.”

“What else?” coaxed the Chairman. “Apples.” “What else?” “I don’t know nothing more.” “Didn’t you get anything else?” He yelled at him. The child burst into tears. The Chairman now hustled his charges out hastily and quickly closed the door.

“The damn fool,” Mr. Keen remarked. “He spoiled my lunch.” Immediately steaming food was placed before us and everybody ‘fell to’, even Mr. Keen ate heartily, in spite of the children.

As coffee was served, which is the last course at the American table, the Chairman got to his feet again: “And now, gentlemen, for the chief surprise of the day. I want to introduce to you a personage of whom his country can justly be proud. Father Kelly, Fighting Chaplain of the greatest fighting force in the world. His boys died bravely, heroically, with a smile on their lips. Father Kelly!” Everybody clapped.

Father Kelly stood up, a priest in army uniform! Only, his collar was turned front backwards. “I thank the chairman for his kind words,” he said. “But I’m sure that any one of you here would have done his duty for his God and Country as I have mine. My hope is, that the Almighty God in His Infinite Wisdom will keep me to render further service to our country in the future as I have done in the past. . . .”



THE BELT

AMERICAN efficiency is almost a fetish with us. We strive to achieve it in our Soviet Union. Fine machines are a triumph of Science—untiring iron servants of men. I heard so much about the automobile factories, even before I came to America, that I looked forward to the opportunity to visit one. Therefore, when Mr. Keen told me he had made all the necessary arrangements to visit a plant, I was delighted.

We drove all night. It was a joy to watch the motor car eat up the patch of light, ever before it. We had just enough time for breakfast. And then to the factory! There I saw the famous "Belt", whereby an automobile is nothing at one end and complete at the other.

The Belt! Men danced to its rhythm. With precision, with economy of motion. But a swift dance indeed!

"How often do they rest?" I asked the foreman.

"They're not here to rest—they come here to work."

"How much vacation do they get?"

"That depends on how long we shut down."

"Do they get their full pay?"

He merely looked at me. He seemed to think there was something wrong with me.

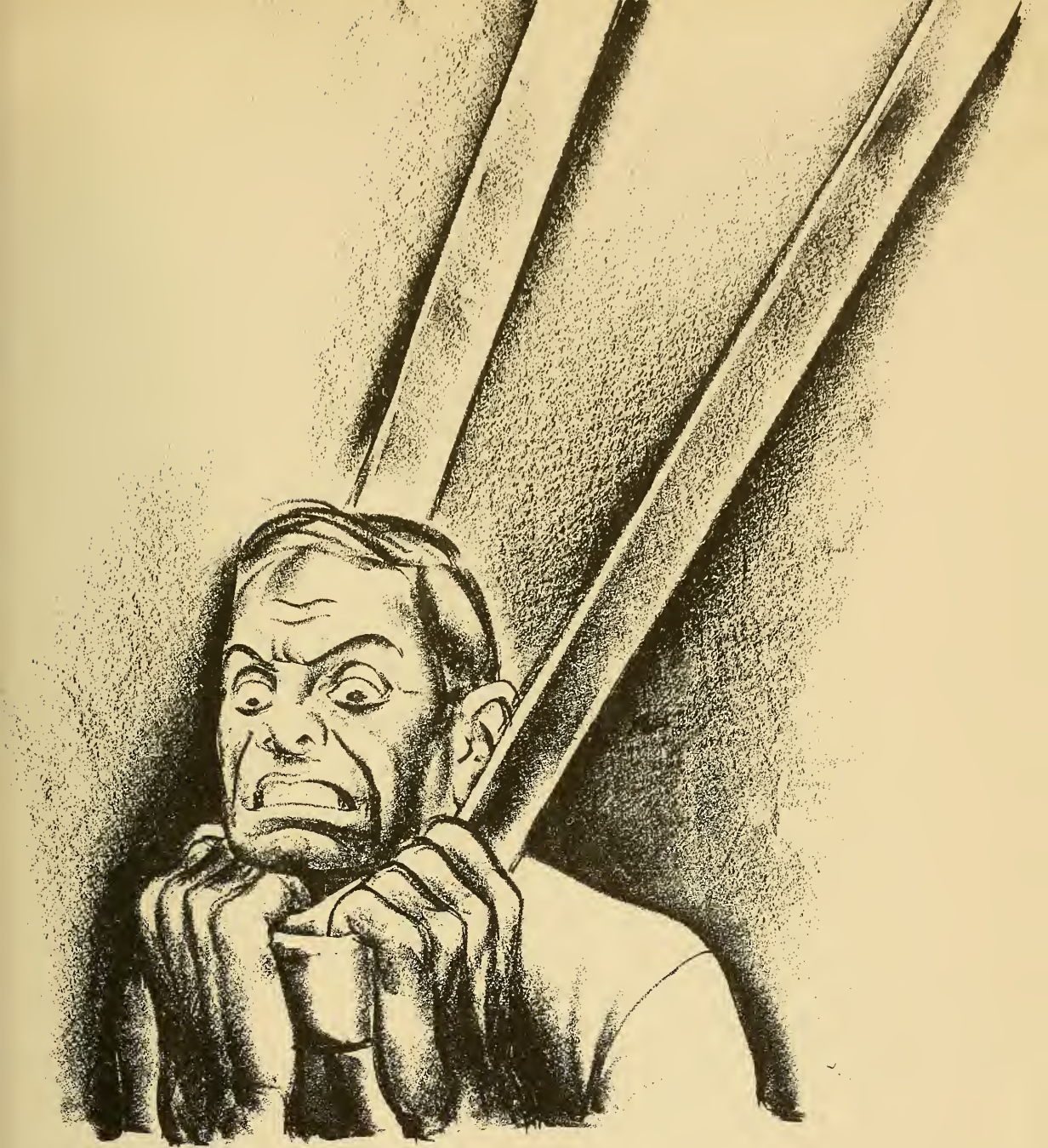
"I notice all the workers are young men," I remarked.

"Sure, why shouldn't they be? This is not an old man's home. This is a factory!"

"What happens to the older men? Are they pensioned off?"

"Pensioned?" He was indignant. "What do you think this is, a charity institution?"

Greed drives the Belt and directs the movement of thousands of humans. They strain nerve and muscle to create wealth for one man. The faster they work, the sooner they work themselves out of jobs. If they don't work fast enough, the Boss fires them. This is considered an incentive.



JUNK

THAT evening I visited the home of a Ford worker. He was not a bit surprised to see me. He told me that our mutual friend, the Negro Poet, who gave me his address, notified him about my coming. The worker's wife served coffee and warm apple pie in the spotlessly white kitchen. She expressed disappointment because I had not come for dinner.

They had friends in the Soviet Union. They showed me a letter from a former Ford worker, who is now employed at a Moscow automobile factory and is a shock brigader. He was elected a member of the Moscow Soviet. "And he wasn't even a Russian citizen," they told me over and over again. They seemed to think there was something extraordinary about that.

Another man came. When they introduced me to him, he exclaimed: "Why, you're the man who asked all those questions at the factory this morning. You sure made the foreman mad. I told the boys about you at lunch. When you asked about 'rests', that was a hot one! The boys enjoyed that. We don't even get time off to sneeze. Specially now, since we got that raise. I guess you read about it. The papers were full of ballyhoo about our six-dollar day. But they didn't say that we only work one or two days a week. They increased our pay twenty percent but production was stepped up as high as sixty percent. As a result the midnight shift was laid off. When the men got the gate their blood was up and they smashed machines. It took the machine guns of the 'Service Department' and death staring them in the face to stop them.

"When I heard you ask all those questions this morning I was looking for a break to tell you a thing or two. But I couldn't. We have to be mighty careful at the plant. It's lousy with stool pigeons."

"I was doing a little figuring last Sunday," said the host. "When I got the job six years ago, in my department a hundred and sixty men made three thousand tire carriers. To-day sixteen men make nearly seven thousand of them. Sixteen men produce more than twice as much as a hundred and sixty did six years ago. If this keeps up we will all be without jobs. There are seventeen million unemployed in the United States. And to-day we can produce more without them, than with them when all were working. How the poor stiffs can expect ever to be employed again is beyond me!"



THE FARMER IN THE DELL

AS we were driving through the wheat country, I saw an automobile drawn by horses. It was a queer sight. Then I saw another automobile, mule-drawn. Then later I saw one pulled by oxen. "What's the matter with the American automobiles? I thought they were good," I said to Mr. Keen.

"There's nothing the matter with the cars. It's the price of the gas."

At the next town we found quite a few automobiles with the motive power tied to hitching posts!

A big crowd was gathered around the court-house. On the steps an officious looking gentleman, in immaculate attire, contrasted strangely with the bedraggled overalls and nondescript garments of the men milling around him. We stepped out of the car to learn what was happening. A few hostile farmers immediately surrounded us.

The man on the steps harangued the crowd: "This piece of property has a mortgage on it of \$300." he shouted "The place is worth at least twice that much. Who's going to start off with \$300?" Nobody answered—glances shifted towards us suspiciously. "Come on, gentlemen, we haven't all day! Who'll start it off with a bid of 200?" A voice in the crowd called: "I bid one twenty-five." "Ridiculous, ridiculous! This gentleman is bidding hundred twenty-five. This property is a gift at five hundred."

Another voice called: "I bid one fifty." "Come gentlemen, what's the matter with you? Who's next? Any more bids? Don't I hear anyone offer hundred seventy-five? If you don't talk up I've got to sell it, there have been two bids. That makes it a legal sale? Are you all through bidding? Hundred fifty once. Hundred fifty twice. Your last chance! SOLD! The man gets the biggest bargain of his life. The property is sold to this man for a hundred and fifty dollars."

"Hundred fifty *dollars*? Man, you're crazy! I bid a hundred and fifty *cents*." A great roar of laughter came from the crowd.

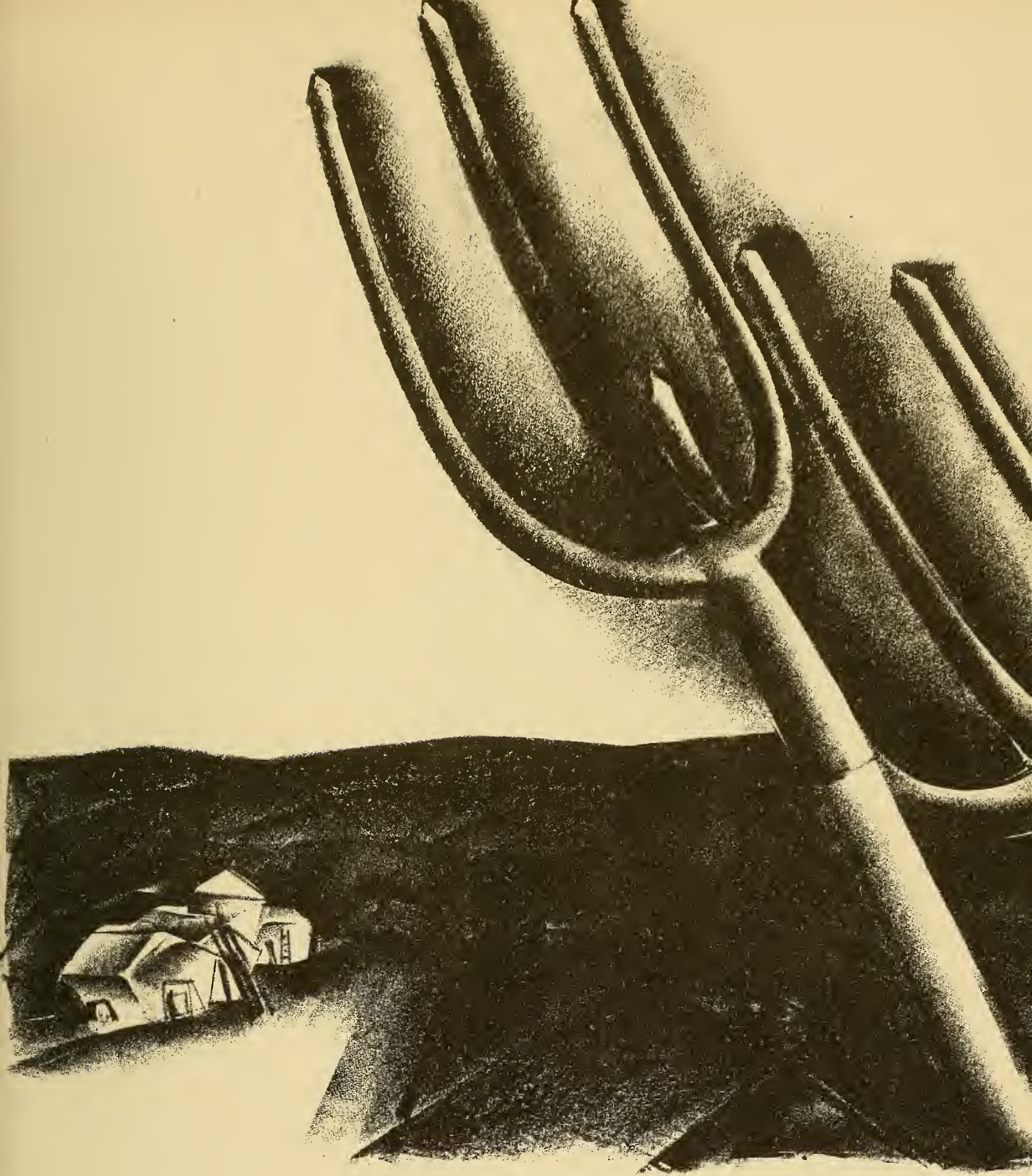
"That's right!" said another. "He only bid one dollar and fifty *cents*."

"Sure," said the third, "he topped me, I bid a dollar twenty-five. Who the hell living around here would have a hundred and fifty dollars besides yourself and the bankers?"

The man got red in the face. "You can't make a fool out of me! Are you here, Sheriff?" He looked around for protection.

"Look here," said the man who bought the property. "You said two bids make the sale legal. Isn't that so?" He turned to the crowd. "That's right," shouted the men. "Now, if you know what's good for you, that deal is closed!" "You bet it's closed!" shouted several in the crowd, threateningly.

And it seems, that *finished* the business.



BEHIND THE NEWS

ON the way back to New York we stopped at a roadside inn for the night. On a table I saw a newspaper. Its screaming headline caught my eye: "Starvation in the Soviet Union." I could not believe it. Yet there it was in print as large as life. I picked it up and there was a photograph of the starved people. Now, how could that be? I pondered. Our factories turn out hundreds of thousands of tractors and other farm machines. Millions of acres of new land are plowed up each year. The land yields double with our improved cultivation. Fodder for milk cows and sheep, food for hog and poultry. Plenty of everything! "Twenty one millions starved in the Ukraine in 1933," I read, and I threw the paper down greatly relieved! Then I knew that the whole thing was a lie from beginning to end. It so happened that in 1933 I was working in the Ukraine. Starvation! Not even a dog went without food. Why do they print such lies in America?

When Mr. Keen joined me, I showed him the paper.

"A Hearst paper!" He snorted with disgust. "What do you expect?"

"What is a Hearst paper?" I asked.

"A Hearst paper is a paper that prints what Mr. Hearst wants it to print. It is owned by Mr. Hearst. There are many of them throughout the country."

"But how can he print what is not true?" I asked, puzzled.

"Truth has nothing to do with printing newspapers," said Mr. Keen. "Don't lose any sleep over it."

"But it is slanderous, it makes it seem as though we could not run our country. When the truth is, that we, in our country, were able to achieve in seventeen years, what took the rest of the World a couple of centuries. In spite of that according to him Communism is a failure!"

"You expect Mr. Hearst to tell the American people that Communism is a success and put ideas into their heads? Man, be reasonable! Mr. Hearst is very rich."



SILVER

WHEN we got back to New York, I asked Mr. Keen to let me off at the beautiful girl's house.

"Don't you want to brush up at the apartment first?" Mr. Keen asked.

"I guess I could stand some brushing up, but I'm in a hurry!"

Mr. Keen laughed: "I'm afraid you're too romantic for a Bolshevik."

"Russians call Americans 'cold-blooded'," I laughed, and I rushed off.

As luck would have it, the girl was home—alone. "Well, well," she greeted me, "Turn around and let me look at you. I see you still have your scalp. The Indians didn't take it in our Wild West."

"I'd better look out," I told her, "that you don't take it!"

She straightened my necktie, then turned on the radio and we danced until the program was interrupted by an announcement: "Father Coughlin of the Shrine of the Little Flower."

"Religion is the opium of the people," I said and I turned to another station.

"Oh no! Let's listen to him," said the girl.

"Mr. Keen explained it all," I told her. "The priest is a speculator. He bought a half-million ounces of silver and wants the Government to issue money on a silver basis and thus the price of silver would go up."

But, to please the girl, I turned the radio back to the voice of Father Coughlin, which said: "Silver is the key to world prosperity. . . . Forward to Christ all ye people! March, march to-day! God wills it—this religious crusade against the Pagan God of Gold! For Gentile Silver. . . . For the benefit of the American people who are to-day in bondage to the Gold controllers."

"Have you ever heard of Rasputin, the last monk of the Czars?" I asked.

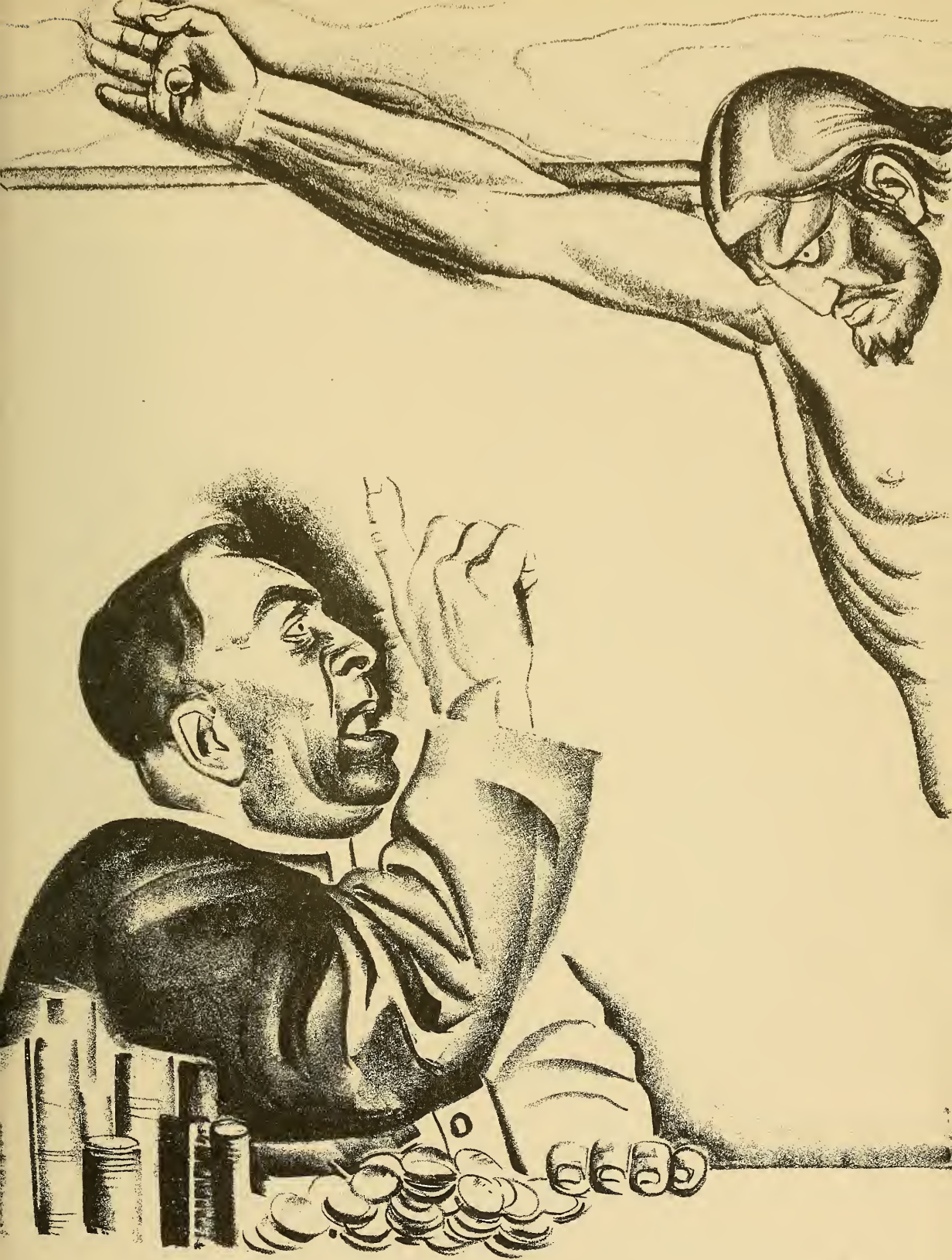
"Yes, what about him?" she said.

"You see he too was a 'Savior' of the people. He too railed against the Bankers. But after the revolution papers turned up in the archives which proved him a tool of a group of financiers."

"But Father Coughlin isn't like that," insisted the girl, trying to reassure herself. "He is against the Bankers just like you are."

The voice of Father Coughlin continued: "The Communists . . . by God I'll shoot them! We can't be pussyfooters. The reason I say I'll shoot them down with bullets, if necessary, is because they want to take my God from me, my soul from me, my country from me. . . . To-day the outposts of Germany are the frontiers of our Civilization. . . ."

The girl snapped off the radio and was greatly embarrassed. "I'm so sorry," she apologized.



UNDERTOW

MY Sweetie, as they say in America, invited a group of her friends to meet the "wild Bolshevik". I surmised that a representative group of the *Intelligentsia* was present—both men and women. They seemed very curious about Russia and asked me all kinds of questions. It was astounding how misinformed they were about us. For instance, they talked of Stalin as a dictator. They compared him to Hitler! One asked, "Were you sent over here to make propaganda?"

"Yes," I answered, "propaganda. When I get back to my country I'll tell them all about America. You see, I'll be spreading American propaganda."

Everyone laughed. But I didn't see anything funny about that. I told them that was precisely the reason I came to America. Of course, I did not boast about the trip being a reward for the best shock brigadier of the Moscow ball-bearing factory.* I asked how many of them expected to be visiting our Soviet Union and thus see what I described, for themselves. Again they laughed.

"Can you hitch-hike across there?" asked one. "Because that was the only way I could come down from the country to be here tonight."

"What is your profession?" I asked.

He laughed: "I'm an actor, but I guess only an amateur, because I haven't earned a nickel at it during the past three years. I'm raising potatoes for my food. And if I would act out there in the potato field, I guess I would have to make-believe about eating too! Beatrice, you want to tell him about yourself?" He turned to a very pretty girl.

"Oh, I'm still dancing," she said. "Come around and see me sometime—at Childs'. I glide from table to table, to the kitchen and back again, gracefully, with a trayful of dishes. Oh, I get a 'break' now and then." They all laughed.

As bottle after bottle was uncorked professional secrets flowed with the wine. "You see this?" asked one of the guests, lifting a bottle. "Me," and he patted his chest, "the great builder of skyscrapers, I designed this! If I were not full of its contents I'd be ashamed to admit it even to myself." But nobody laughed at him.

* Originally, my trip was to be confined to our Soviet land, but Mr. Keen's invitation to come to the United States arrived just at that moment and I accepted it.



EVERY MAN A KING

MY Negro friend had also been invited. But he didn't come until midnight. He hastened to apologize to the hostess: "I'm awfully sorry I couldn't get here sooner, I was detained in my professional capacity." She was a little peeved. "It's just too bad you poets can't keep regular hours like other ordinary mortals. And do your writing in the daytime!" "Writing?" He grinned. "Did you say writing or riding? I run an elevator in an apartment house!" Everybody roared.

"Well, it's his own fault," I spoke up. "When he was over in the Soviet Union, we coaxed him to stay and do his work there. We offered him the best of everything, but he wouldn't stay. He told us he didn't want to eat our pie—America's pie was yet to be made!"

"We had our Revolution in '76," said the actor. "All we have to do is to go back to it."

"No, not back, forward to the new 1776," said the Negro boy.

"Don't make any difference to me, as long as we get out of this mess. The New Deal is a flop—and Roosevelt will go next. Then, maybe, we can do something."

"That's what everybody said when we got rid of Hoover. It will take more than merely getting rid of Roosevelt."

"Well, who do you think can do the job?"

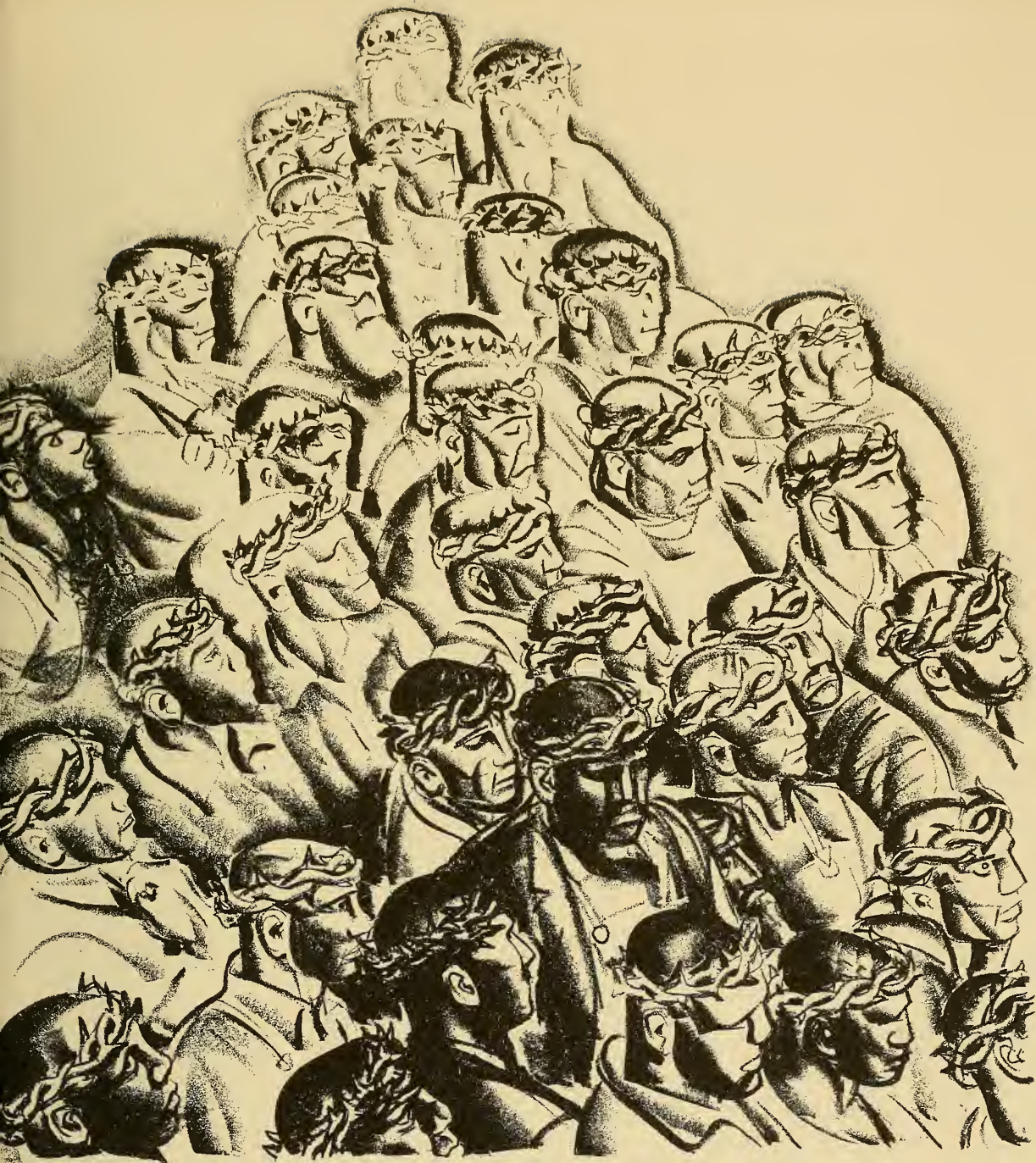
"All of us together, the people. The workers and farmers and we helping."

"Oh, that would take ages! How about Huey Long?*" He's out to give a job to everybody with an income of at least \$2500 a year. It's not much, but at least it's security and that could be done at once."

"Huey Long?" the poet laughed. "The trouble is that you prefer to believe in Messiahs instead of doing something for yourself. I come from the State where that man is Boss and has been for years. He himself said, 'I'm the Constitution in Louisiana'. He is, virtually a dictator. Have you any idea of what he had done down there?"

"I'll tell you. I have a brother working down there on State Construction jobs. Twenty-five hundred dollars a year? My brother gets 10 cents an hour. Do you think it's because he's a Negro? The white man gets the same. In that respect there's 'equality'. A labor union delegation went to Huey Long protesting the coolie wage. You know what he told them? 'The wage scale in this State is the lowest that we can get men to work for'. That's the man who'll make every man a King. On ten cents an hour!"

* Since this was written Huey Long was assassinated by his political adversaries, who are even more reactionary than he was. I also read in the American newspapers that a labor party actually representing the workers, farmers, small business men and the intellectuals is in process of formation.



BATTLE CRY

I WAS on my way to meet my girl at the college to have lunch with her. Coming out of the subway, I had to elbow my way through a regiment of policemen. They blocked the entrance. I thought that something important was happening and my guess proved altogether correct. The school grounds were crowded with people. As I pushed my way through them I saw a line of marchers carrying placards. Imagine my astonishment when I spied my girl heading the picket line! I hastened to join her. "You better get out of here," she warned. "You're already under indictment."

"Oh that time I was only an onlooker," I said and grabbed a placard and fell into line beside her.

"Down with Fascism on the campus" my sign read. Of a sudden a blue wave descended upon us—the very momentum of which swept us clear off the campus. Before we realized what had happened we were out in the streets. Two solid lines of policemen held the campus against us.

We reformed our lines and started a march around the college. Here and there a voice shouted slogans and other voices took them up and wove them into chants:

"Brass buttons, blue coats,
They think we're sheep and nannygoats.
Our brave instructors got the sack
For fighting war! *We want them back!*

"Brass buttons, blue coats,
They think we're sheep and nannygoats.
Our fearless teachers' fight is right!
To get them back, we're out on strike!"

"The policemen are in the school," I exclaimed, "and the students are out in the street!"

The girl smiled understandingly and continued to chant:

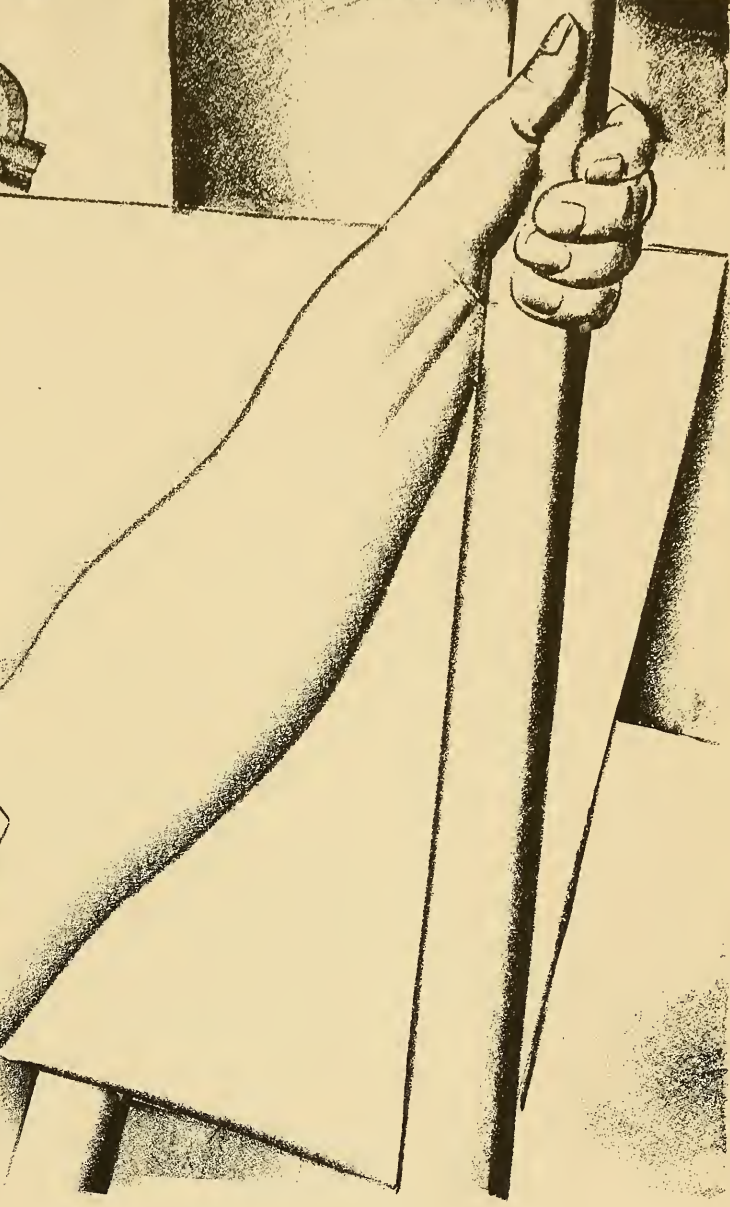
"Students, rally to our aid,
We fight against the 'Big Parade'
Banker writes the check, By Heck!
Education? Heck! He writes the check!
He wants to check and double check,
If he says war—it's war, By Heck
—Like Hell!"

FIGHT
against

WAR

and

FASCISM



THUNDER IN THE WEST

ONE evening my girl and I went to a meeting in the biggest hall I have ever seen. We sat in the top-most balcony. Tier after tier was filled with a vast assemblage of men and women.

"Look," said my girl, pointing below to the floor. "It looks like a flower bed—the people are the flowers. What a blaze of color! The long aisles are like garden walks."

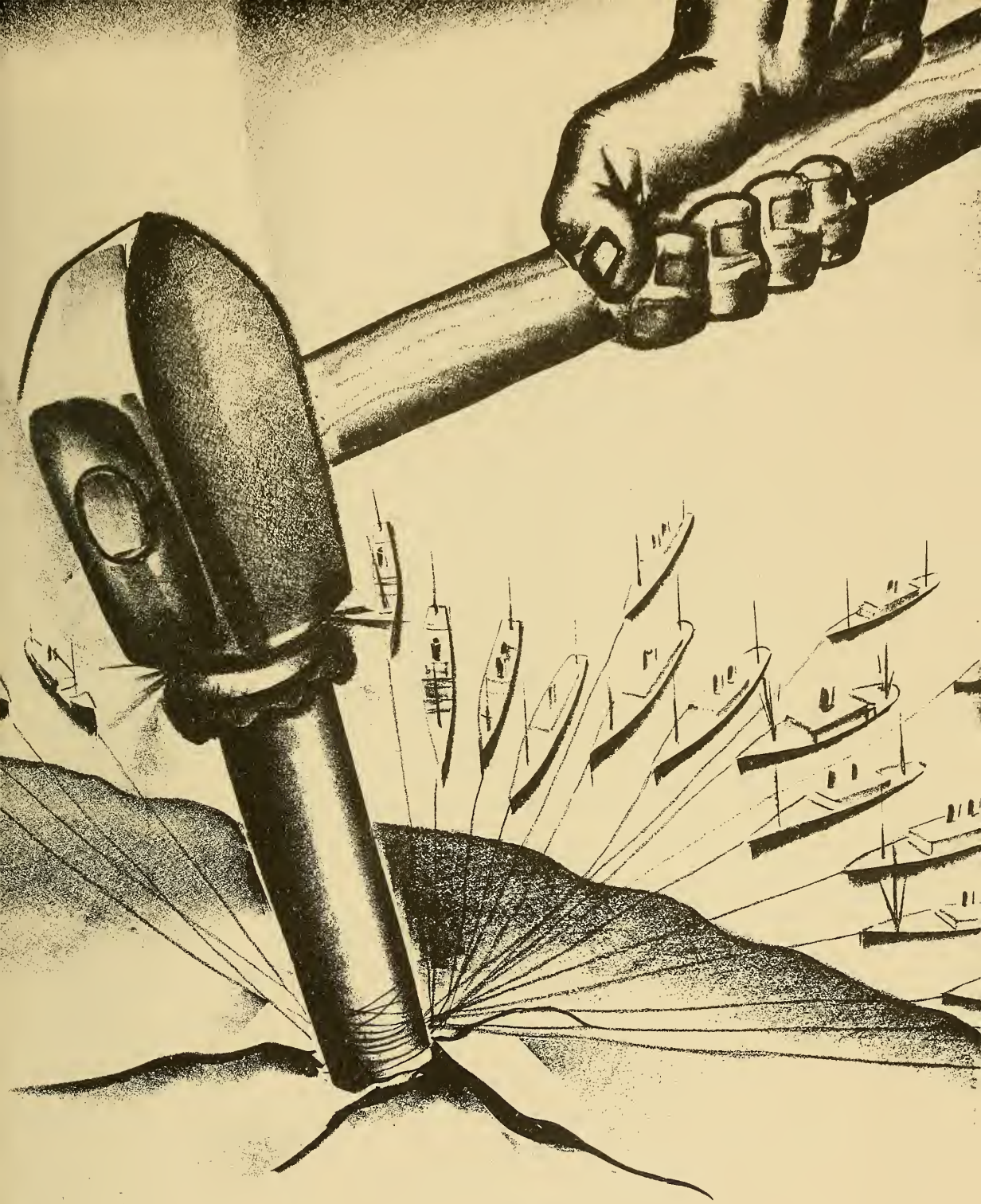
It was true. And as I looked up and around the gigantic hall my eye was caught by huge signs. Some of these, like DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION and DEFEND THE CHINESE SOVIETS, I readily understood. I also understood such signs as FREE TOM MOONEY and FREE THE SCOTTSBORO BOYS, for we have such slogans prominently displayed at home.

At the end of the hall, behind the speakers' stand, the largest banner of all hung from the ceiling. It declared: SMASH FASCIST TERROR IN THE WEST.

"This meeting has been called to explain how we can do just that," whispered my girl.

Suddenly a voice boomed throughout the hall. Although no one was visible on the platform, the voice came from the loud speaker. Suddenly in the distance, at the other end of the hall and in front of the banner, my eye caught sight of a man who seemed no bigger than my thumb. At first I had some difficulty understanding what his words referred to. "Every seaport from Seattle to San Diego—2000 miles—is tied up," he said, and everybody applauded. "For forty-five days no ship has sailed in or out of the Golden Gate," he said and the applause was louder. "The bosses imported gunmen," he cried. Angry boos came from the audience. "Troops and police brought tanks and artillery," the little man shouted. "Every radio station, newspaper and pulpit aroused hatred against us. Our union headquarters were raided. Our strike headquarters were destroyed. Our homes were invaded. Our families were terrorized. The Federal Government sent General Johnson to break the strike. He enlisted Archbishop Hanna and the reactionary labor officials openly betrayed us. And they warned *us* about being 'mised' by the Communists."

The audience laughed,



HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

EARLY one morning I was making ready to leave the apartment in order to meet my girl, when Mr. Keen declared: "This is the date set for your trial. And you had better be there—I want that bail money back." As he said the last words, there was a twinkle in his eye.

When we arrived at the courtroom, we found it packed with sympathetic workers. Several lawyers from the International Labor Defense were present to defend us. One of them informed me that several thousand letters and telegrams protesting against our arrest, addressed to the judge, came from all parts of the country.

A few minutes later the lawyer returned with the news that the charges against us would not be pressed! Mr. Keen got his money back, but his prophecy proved correct: my visa was not renewed, and I was told that I would have to leave the country.

The Soviet trading vessel, which was to take me home, was in port, and I took my girl down to see it and to meet the comrades from my homeland. Two German seamen, whose ship was docked near by, were visiting aboard our ship.

We all stayed for dinner. The Captain sat between the two German seamen, who were guests of honor. One of the Germans lifted his glass to the Captain and said: "Just imagine our Captain, or any captain on a Hitler boat, sitting down to table with the crew!"

"The captain doesn't eat with the crew on American ships either," said my girl.

"But Hitler promised a revolution," said the German sailor. "He promised us lots—he was going to satisfy everybody."

"That sounds just like Huey Long and Father Coughlin," said my girl, looking to me for approval.

"But the only promises he fulfilled were the promises he made to his financiers," exclaimed the German sailor. "They used to hold us down with words," he said very quietly but with terrible intensity. "Now they use bullets and the executioner's axe. They have nothing more to use. Our turn comes next!"



THE GIANT

TO celebrate our freedom, Mr. Keen gave a party for all the defendants. It was also a farewell party for me. One of the guests—the artist who made that cartoon on the wall in jail—brought a painting and proposed that it be raffled off for the benefit of the International Labor Defense in appreciation of their work in getting us free. The picture depicted the police assault on us at the time of our arrest. There were many comments and jokes as the guests pointed out each other on the canvas.

“Aren’t artists supposed to fight?” a young worker teasingly asked. “I don’t see you in the picture.”

“Stop picking on him,” said the deep voice of the worker who had the physique of a giant. “An artist’s job is to paint pictures.” He turned to me with a smile, and his eyes twinkled as he said: “Didn’t Lenin say ‘from each according to his ability’?” He held up a mighty fist, and added, “And my job is to sock them according to their needs!”

Everybody cheered.

“Just like Hearst,” teased the young worker. “The artist makes the picture and you make the war.”

“*Me* like Hearst?” roared the giant. “Why you can’t say that even in fun. I will start a war right here!”

There were cheers and shouts of laughter.

The music struck up and we began to dance. As we danced we sang. And when the orchestra stopped, we sang our own songs—familiar to me in Russian, familiar to these Americans, familiar in all countries. We lost all sense of time and had completely forgotten that I was to return that night to the workers’ homeland. Suddenly Mr. Keen reminded us. We arrived at the boat several minutes late. They were holding the gangplank ready for me.

I did not have time to shake hands with everybody. But, of course, I did have time to kiss the girl. As I was doing so, I felt someone thrust a large object under my arm, and as I went up the gangplank I noticed it was the picture that had been raffled off at the party. The man who had won it had given it to me. At first I thought it was a last personal kindness, but as I stepped on deck I saw the following words written in red ink on the back of the picture:

“To our Russian Comrades with Revolutionary Greetings from America.”

As the boat pulled out I was profoundly sorry to leave this strange land in which I had found so many comrades. Suddenly my girl’s voice rang out. “NICHEVO,” she cried, “I’ll join you in the Soviet Union—soon.”



A NEW WORLD

Dear Mr. Keen:

The workers of our factory, the Moscow Ball-Bearing Combinat, held a reception for me upon my return, at which I made a report upon my American travels.

My words had a very peculiar effect. I had spoken, as I thought, in a serious vein, but at the most unexpected places laughter would break out. Several times the merriment was so overwhelming that the chairman had to restore order before I could proceed. Several times exclamations of indignation reached my ears.

I had no sooner concluded than a comrade who had been sitting in the front row demanded the floor. He said that my American experiences were certain to have a lasting effect upon my state of mind. Therefore, he proposed that instead of permitting me to return to work I should be sent to a sanitarium in Crimea to recuperate from the effects of my trip.

I am writing this letter sitting on the lawn before a former summer palace of the Czar, which is now a sanitarium for workers.

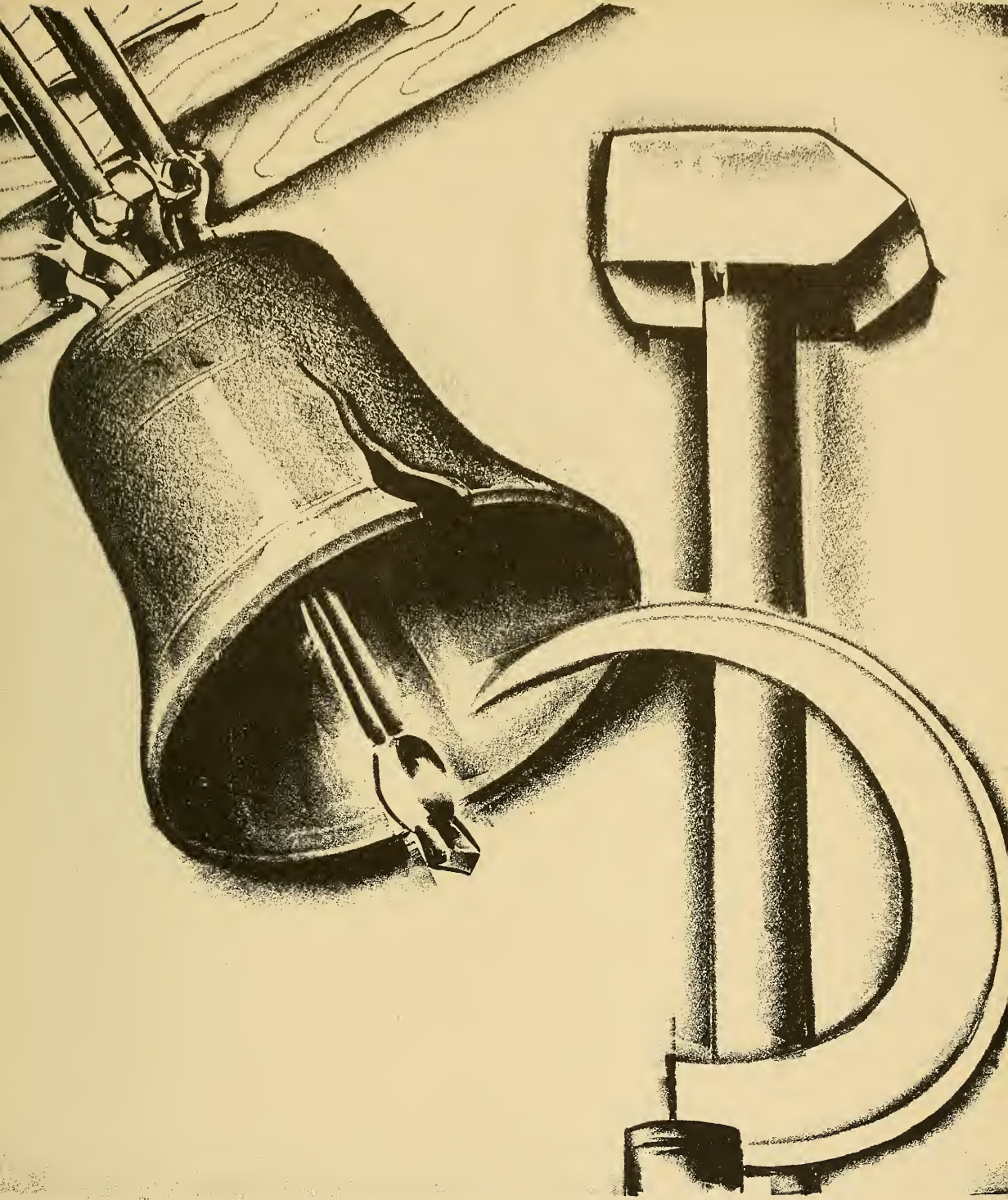
To make everything perfect, like the happy endings of your Hollywood movies, my vacation turned out to be my honeymoon as well. My lovely American girl traveled on a fast steamer and got here during the first week of my vacation. As you would say, "she made a great hit with everybody."

In true American style she obtained a position as teacher in a Moscow school for the children of American technicians and she had only been in Moscow two days! All the time she has been here she has been practicing on me, to my great enjoyment. She has copied out some words from your Declaration of Independence which she says every school child should learn by heart. I will set them down for you, because, she says, so many Americans have forgotten them: "Whenever any form of government becomes destructive . . . it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it . . . it is the right, it is their duty, to throw off such government and to provide new safeguards for their future security."

What a paradise America will then turn out to be!

We in the Soviet Union had to make super-human sacrifices in order to overcome the backwardness of our country. In America everything is ready. All you have to do is open the full warehouse and feed and clothe everybody! Open the vacant apartments and dwellings and house everybody! Open the factories! Set the farm machines humming! There are jobs for all!

Let me thank you once more for letting me see the many strange marvels of your country. I hope that when we next meet I shall greet a Comrade Keen.







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